From Study to Sanctuary:
Planning a Calendar and Developing a
Process for Effective Preaching

A Thesis-Project

Submitted to the Faculty of

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

Phillip Hargrove Jr.

Greenville, South Carolina

January 2018

Acknowledgements

To Cary: my wife, soul mate, best friend, and ministry partner—thank you for putting up with more pouting and procrastination than productivity through the years. You make doing life together an adventure and a joy. My heart will always find its home with you.

To Allie, Mia, Lincoln, and Rosa—thank you for humoring me by saying that you love it when daddy preaches. I'm starting to believe it.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

Preaching is a pastor's central calling in the local church. As such, proclamation needs to occupy a considerable amount of a pastor's time and best efforts. This project gives the pastor a foundation for planning sermons in advance and offers sermon preparation processes as examples to incorporate into one's own practice. The project demonstrates that planning a preaching calendar and following a sermon preparation process result in more effective sermons, as well as a greater sense of peace for the pastor.

Chapter 1

The Problem and Its Setting

The Scene

Senior Pastor Bill Jennings of Medium Midwest Town's First Congregational Church was tense. The blue ribbon at the top of his MacBook Air projected 11:37 a.m. on this Saturday late morning. The battery charge icon to the left of the time sat red with only 3 percent charge left. In ten minutes his laptop would go into hibernation mode, and Bill wished he could do the same. His body's battery was running low on energy as well, his mind void of creativity. The staccato clicking keys from the notebook at 8 a.m. now were as silent as a bag of popcorn left in the microwave two minutes too long. Pastor Jennings's back protested from hunching over his desk in his cordoned-off basement home office since 5:45 that morning. His heart fluttered inside his chest as panicky thoughts raced through his mind when he thought about standing in the high pulpit at First Congregational in front of six hundred expectant congregants in exactly twenty-four hours.

Bill took a three-hour break to watch his son's soccer game at the athletic complex across town and to wolf down a turkey sandwich for a late lunch. As he plopped down into his desk chair at midafternoon, he was harboring resentment over mentally checking out at the soccer game—biding his time there to check off the "good dad" box as he silently stewed uneasily over tomorrow's sermon, wondering what his "Big Idea" would be and how he was going to structure the sermon. He longed to flip on the flat screen TV on the opposite wall and escape in a surround-sound-enhanced Big Ten football rivalry on this celery-crisp fall Saturday afternoon.

As he pulled himself together and stared at the blinking cursor with his third cup of coffee billowing steam beside his mouse, negative thoughts careened through his head and did their normal weekly accusatory roll call: "You're in the same place again this week that you always are. Why can't you just be more disciplined and get it together?" "Other pastors have taken preaching seriously and aren't being irresponsible like you." "Tomorrow morning there will be hundreds of people needing a powerful message and you aren't sure where you're even going!" "Are you sure you are called to preach?"

Bill visualized standing in front of his congregation with nothing to say, paralyzed as if his mouth was jammed with marbles. He often dreamed of Sunday morning calamities on Saturday nights with varying scripts. In one he oversleeps and, therefore, forfeits having several needed hours early on Sunday to finish his sermon. In another, Pastor Bill walks into the pulpit but loses his hastily prepared manuscript. He is lost as a result and feels exposed and vulnerable.

Bill followed his normal routine of wallowing in self-pity until dinner with not much progress on his sermon. He found himself checking email every ten minutes as well as ESPN.com to get updates on college football scores. During dinner, he came across as irritated with his four children. He silently resented their energy and loud conversation as it interrupted the thoughts banging around his head about tomorrow's sermon and made him lose his train of thought. He internally seethed, "Don't they know what's staring me in the face?"

Back down in the basement, he holed up until 11:56 p.m. with about 70 percent of his sermon done. He reasoned that with six pages done, he could

wing the last third of the sermon and conclusion if necessary. Before trudging upstairs and collapsing in bed, Bill set his alarm for 4:45 a.m. to finish. He was always amazed at how three hours went so quickly and sermon writing so slowly during those predawn Sunday morning hours.

The 8 a.m. Sunday morning meeting with First Congregation Church's other pastors provided relief for Bill—it signaled a hard stop. At 7:20, he clicked the Print icon, snatched the double-spaced eight pages from his Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 1100 printer tray, and scrawled some phrases below the "Conclusion" section that he hoped he could decipher when trying to land the sermon in an hour at First's first service. He reasoned that he could rework things in the hour between services and skip being in the Fellowship Hall for coffee and conversation with congregation members. Besides, the 8:30 early service had the smallest attendance and oldest members, and could be seen as a warm-up to work out the sermon's kinks.

Hoping that the bank of traffic signals lining Main Street where First Church has nestled for the last 178 years would be green, Bill wheeled his Honda Pilot SUV into the church parking lot at 8:03 a.m. With one large gulp he downed his second twenty-ounce coffee that morning, hoping that the hot beverage would warm up his vocal cords and give late inspiration. Jittery from both the onslaught of caffeine and adrenaline from the razor-thin time margins, he vowed to "do things differently next week"—a familiar pronouncement that had not become a reality since he started at First Congregational five years ago.

Bill slung his leather satchel over his shoulder and trotted into a jog. He knew all were waiting for him in the conference room to do a rushed run-through of the worship service's parts. In part desperation, part self-

flagellation he muttered, "Lord, help me." Pastor Jennings avoided eye

contact with Marilynn Brown walking up the opposite sidewalk so as to not

get caught talking and be even later to the meeting. He trained his eyes on

the entrance doors to the Ellis Administration Building as his last vestige of

solitary sermon struggle before he was on.

The Problem

J. Kent Edwards succinctly states that "Saturday Night Specials"[1]

result in "desperate preaching, not creative exposition.[2] Paul Tripp warns

against a lack of adequate preparation and lead time:

> It is necessary for me to live with a passage, to carry it around with me, and to marinate my soul with its nourishing and thirst-quenching waters. I simply can't do this in a couple hours. I need meditative time with the passage so the Spirit can work through it in me and through me to the people under my care.
>   If you are developing original content late on a Saturday evening, you have no business preaching it on Sunday. It's unlikely that you will have understood the full range of the radical gospel glories of the passage, it's doubtful that they have confronted your heart, and it's unlikely that you have developed much readiness to communicate them winsomely and practically to your listeners.[3]

The problem that will be addressed in this thesis-project is that Bill

Jennings is not alone in his[4] mad dash to the Sunday sermon finish line.

---

[1] "Saturday Night Specials" in this case are dubbed "Saturday Night Nightmares" because there is rarely anything special about sermon work done in this manner.

[2] J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 119.

[3] Paul Tripp, "The Craft of Life-Changing Preaching," August 26, 2012, accessed September 28, 2016, http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/08/26/the-craft-of-life-changing-preaching/.

[4] For simplicity and to avoid phrases such as "he or she" or "his or her," the author will use masculine singular pronouns when referring to a pastor, though without denying that some pastors are female.

Among a certain segment of pastors[5] there is a weekly recurring drama of procrastination[6] and ensuing angst that they allow preaching to produce. This problem will be addressed at two levels. The first will take a longer, annual view by giving a rationale for advance sermon[7] planning that equips pastors with formulating a preaching calendar. The second level is at the more weekly view in offering standard sermon preparation processes in order to facilitate forward movement on crafting effective sermons.

In the thesis-project, the author will examine what constitutes effective preaching, give examples of sermon planning and preparation methods, and produce a reference guide that summarizes the findings of the thesis. The thesis-project will use focus groups, interviews, surveys, and personal narrative to test the author's hypothesis.

---

[5] Bill's plight is autobiographical, as I include myself here. In talking with colleagues in ministry, I know there are others with my same tendencies.

[6] John Grohol explains, "Most people procrastinate because they pursue perfectionism, are fearful of doing badly at the task, or are simply too disorganized with their time and resources. Procrastination can also more rarely be an indicator of Attention Deficit Disorder" (John Grohol, "Learn About Procrastination," January 10, 2005, accessed September 28, 2016, www.psychcentral.com).

[7] The terms *sermon* and *message* will be used interchangeably in this thesis-project. The author prefers *message* because it connotes more timely focused communication. It also does not have negative implications. Use of the term *sermon*, especially in popular media, is often negative. The adjectives used before *sermon* seem often to be of the "long" and "boring" variety. Sermonizing is not welcomed speech; to sermonize is to speak dogmatically and give unwanted advice in regards to moral behavior.
While not speaking specifically about the distinction between sermon and message, Iain H. Murray makes a case for a message's positive contribution that can result: "M'Cheyne did not just prepare sermons. He had the burden of the people on his soul and came from God with a message . . . having form, thrust, and making an impact. The whole notion of message needs to be recaptured" (Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939–1981* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990], 608).

The Rationale for Planning and Developing a Process

Sermon preparation, a "glorious toil,"[8] is difficult.[9] If there is no default pattern the work can be pushed back to the last minute. In not having a well-defined process for planning, preaching, and preparing sermons that allows for sufficient time and energy for the task, plagiarism can be the result.[10] Last-minute preparation often led sot hollow preaching lacks creativity, causes stress for the pastor and his family, and does not account for the unexpected in life and in ministry.[11]

Lack of planning leads to the Monday morning mantra of "Hmmm, I wonder what I will preach on this Sunday. . . ." Indecisiveness and lack of planning predispose pastors to theological hobbyhorses.[12]

---

[8] John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 50.

[9] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones offers, "The hardest part of a minister's work is the preparation of sermons. It is a trying process. There is agony in it" (Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd Jones*, 603).

[10] Michael Duduit observes, "Plagiarism has always been the reality of Saturday-night specials." ("Preaching and Plagiarism," blog post, June 5, 2013, accessed September 28, 2016, MichaelDuduit.com). Interestingly, "Saturday Night Special" is a slang term generally used to refer disparagingly to relatively compact, less expensive, small-caliber handguns used for criminal activity or protection against criminal activity by the lower classes ("Saturday Night Specials," April 21, 1999, accessed September 28, 2016, www.nraila.org).

[11] As an example, recently I had a "late entry" visual that I was going to use for a sermon illustration that involved an old Betamax VCR. I secured a cart, put the Betamax on the top shelf, and rolled it down the long hallway towards the sanctuary as folks were getting settled. When I hit the carpet, one wheel came off the cart and would not go back on as congregants curiously watched me try desperately to reattach the defunct wheel. It was a visual lesson for me that that the unexpected can happen where "the wheels fall off." My not having the cart and machine in place beforehand garnered some embarrassment and a lost opportunity from a communication standpoint.

[12] Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 50.

Often pastors will get past Sunday and think of a creative expression they could have used with the sermon, but it is too late to implement logistically. Planning ahead alleviates the pit in stomach, sinking feeling, rising blood pressure, "what am I going to say Sunday?" scenario.

The Hypothesis

Greater clarity in planning a preaching calendar and in a sermon preparation process results in greater effectiveness in the pulpit and peace for the preacher. Simply put, advanced planning and preparation methods equal better sermons and a better pastor. Pastors can preach more effective sermons by planning a preaching calendar and developing a relatively standard message methodology. They will also experience a greater sense of well-being.

This thesis-project focuses on the practice of ministry in my context and ministry concerns because I am Bill Jennings. My research will help meet my needs as well as those of others in giving examples and templates of advanced sermon planning and preparing messages. What can be called best practices will also be explored in order to examine the methods of leading practitioners. Supply and easy-to-follow reference guide that summarizes the planning and preparation methods should help pastors in a practical way. When preaching is planned in advance and a sermon preparation process incorporates the core effective elements of constructing a sermon, I expect that the feedback received from focus groups and from surveys will be generally positive on pre-established measurable variables.

The Ministry Setting

My hypothesis will be tested in the context of my present ministry setting, First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina. Organized in 1873, this thirty-three- hundred-member church with sixty full-time employees and a 2016 budget of 6.1 million dollars occupies a meticulously landscaped city block in the Southern, medium-sized city of Greenville, South Carolina, with its revived downtown.[13] Leaving the mainline Presbyterian Church (USA) in 2013 over theological issues, the congregation is decidedly evangelical and conservative in its theological and political perspective.[14] A Gothic Revival–style sanctuary speaks to a rootedness to the past while a newer, modernized Harper Chapel indicates a forward-looking future. It is one of the five anchor, "tall steeple" downtown churches,[15] and leaders in the 1970s made an intentional decision to not move First Presbyterian from its downtown location.[16]

---

[13] A former textile town, Greenville, South Carolina, over the past thirty years has been renewed into an arts-rich, pedestrian-friendly "New South" city. This renewal has been well chronicled nationally in such publications as *Forbes* ("Downtown Greenville Chosen as 'Top 10 Transformed Neighborhoods in the Nation,'" July 2013), *USA Today* ("10 Best: Parks That Have Helped Revived Their City," April 10, 2015), and *The Oprah Magazine* ("Favorite Unexpected Vacation Destination," December 2013).

[14] The congregational vote to leave the mainline denomination was 98 percent; bumper stickers during the 2012 general presidential election were almost exclusively for Republicans Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan.

[15] City planners planned the location of the five churches to geographically form a cross on the downtown footprint.

[16] Several downtown churches moved from the center city and bought property in the suburbs and along the interstate for expansion, more room for parking, and hoped-for church growth. Changing demographics and economic development in outlying areas and resultant white flight to the suburbs contributed to the downtown exodus during the 1970s for businesses and some churches.

First Presbyterian Church's membership, while diverse as far as age,[17] is not racially varied, with 99 percent Caucasian members. It has a professional, educated membership with 187 members having a Ph.D. or M.D. degree. With this demographic comes certain expectations.[18] The Sunday worship services need to be done with excellence with preaching as a major piece.[19]

Planning preaching in advance and having a sermon preparation process is not limited to church size, resources, or location. The vital task of preaching and the advantages of planning ahead trump specific church particularities and specific settings. Regardless of the church, the preaching event is both basic and universal in and of itself where it is not subject to local context.[20]

The Importance

The resources present at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, necessitate advance planning for preaching. With a television

---

[17] Having a family of four generations sitting in the same pew is not extraordinary.

[18] A 2014 engagement with the TAG consulting firm from Charlotte, North Carolina, indicated through their work with the church that there exists a decided "consumer mentality."

[19] Churches like First Presbyterian are said to have front-door ministries where people are attracted to the buildings and general facility's aesthetic. Tim Keller notes that the larger the church, the more important the preaching event is and that worship services are done with excellence (Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics," March 2, 2010, accessed September 12, 2012, www.gospelinlife.com).

[20] Preaching will however take the contours of a local congregation's makeup of stories, experiences, fears, hopes, and dreams for purposes of illustration and application.

broadcast each Sunday that includes narration outtakes, along with a staff of five in a communications department that produces banners, signs, cover art for worship folders, website promotions, social media, and videos, the preaching passages and themes, therefore, need to be formulated well in advance in order to take full advantage of these creative avenues.

In a more general sense, pastors need to deal reflectively with their primary calling and identity[21] as a herald of the gospel. Preaching and sermon preparation take up much time in a preacher's week,[22] and the importance of preaching in the life of the church is vital.[23] If preaching is important, there is a need to plan and prepare well for it.[24] D. Martyn Lloyd

---

[21] Sometimes a pastor is referred to as "preacher," particularly in Southern settings. It is interesting that a verb that is one of the pastor's functions also can serve as a title. A salesperson, even though he or she "calls on" clients or "closes" sales, is rarely called a "caller" or "closer" as a designation. It reiterates the expectation that preaching is a major commitment by the designation "preacher."

[22] In a survey by Thom Rainer, the number of hours spent weekly by pastors on sermon preparation was approximately fourteen (Rainer, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* [Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011], 189).

[23] Philip Ryken offers, "The gospel . . . is a transforming message. It is through the explanation and proclamation of God's Word—with exhortation—that believers grow in grace. Therefore, what the church needs is preaching—biblical, expositional, practical preaching that proclaims Christ from all the Scriptures" (Philip Ryken, "Preaching That Reforms," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007], 191). Similarly, John R. W. Stott states, "I believe that nothing is better calculated to restore health and vitality to the Church or to its members into maturity in Christ than a recovery of true, biblical, contemporary preaching" (Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982], 45). If sermon preparation and preaching occupy a large time commitment and are expected to, having a plan and a process as priority naturally follows.

[24] The importance of specifically planning and preparing sermons can be seen in descriptions of events such as Living on the Edge Ministry's Preach the Word conference on October 6-7, 2015. The first three descriptors of the conference's content are 1) Prepare messages for life change; 2) Create a weekly study routine that is less stressful and more fruitful; 3) Plan a series, study a text, and build high

Jones reasons, "Preaching is the primary task of the Church, the primary task of the leaders of the church . . . we must not allow anything to deflect us from this, however good the cause and great the need. The work of preaching is the highest and most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called."[25]

The Opportunity

With clarity and intentionality, this thesis-project anticipates pastors will spend more time on thinking through and working on their content and less time on deciding on what to preach and how to get the message to final form. The author aims to give hope to those who cannot seem to "get it together" in a timely manner and have trouble focusing—a sense of being overwhelmed with preaching responsibilities. Giving a planning and process model can provide a way forward. Pastors will have the benefit of studying other skilled practitioners' routines and modify those routines to make them beneficial to themselves. This is important because preaching is important: "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."[26]

Another expected result of the thesis-project is that when the plan and process are followed, previously harried pastors will find themselves in a different, freeing state of mind and soul. They will experience calmness, a settled feeling that comes from a confidence of faithfully planning and preparing for the vital task of proclamation. They will charter into unknown

---

impact messages ("Take Your Preaching to the Next Level: A Conference for Transformational Teaching," preachtheword.cc).

[25] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 56.

[26] Rom 10:17, New King James Version. Unless otherwise noted, all references are from the New International Version.

waters where the days leading up to Sunday are spent fine-tuning the sermon and making tweaks based upon feedback received from congregation members that serve as a focus group.[27] They will in doing so experience some low-level pain of having to discard in this pruning process content that took time to research and formulate. However, this is the better alternative to the pressure of having to create material in order to have something to say. Prepared preachers will have time to practice orally to ensure vocal flow instead of cramming preparation as Saturday night specials, praying for the Spirit's anointing. The hope is that the weekend will bring full presence at children's morning soccer games, the simple pleasures of watching a college football game anxiety-free, and serenity at supper.

The Purpose

My purpose is to share with pastors other preachers' best practices as a reference guide to aid in planning and preparing their own messages. This will encourage and foster preaching excellence. Specifically, this thesis-project will provide pastors with options for planning a preaching calendar and help them to develop sermon preparation processes that they can adopt for their own in order to preach more effectively. My hope is to find out if planning a preaching calendar and developing a sermon preparation process leads to better, more effective preaching. Gathering data through surveys, sermon evaluation forms, focus group feedback, precedent research, and in-depth interviews will help test the hypothesis. My assumption is that when

---

[27] The project design will use a focus group from the congregation in order to help the preacher with assessment on such aspects of sermon unity, order, progression, clarity, application, and overall effectiveness.

preachers give themselves and others enough lead time for creativity and have a procedure for preparing sermons, they will better be able to communicate the truths of God's Word' that is, they will be more effective in their preaching.

<div align="center">*The Questions*</div>

There are questions that arise when surveying the thesis-project's scope. Some include: What constitutes effective sermons, and how does one operationally define effectiveness? How does one evaluate the effectiveness of a sermon, and what criteria are used? Do messages have certain anchor characteristics that are fundamental to effectiveness and not dependent on the preacher's or hearer's personality, learning style, or spiritual receptivity? What are the different ways of putting together a preaching calendar? What are the different ways of preparing sermons? Do planning and preparing hinder the Holy Spirit? How does personality affect one's view and practice of planning and preparing? How do pastors who are considered effective engage in planning and preparing? What is the interplay of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, both for the preacher and listeners?[28] These questions will be addressed throughout the thesis- project.

---

[28] What can the preacher do that from a human perspective can lead to more effective sermons? This includes learning from related fields such as rhetoric and creativity. Also, what is the congregation's responsibility in listening? Philip Ryken warns against simply showing up to a service and instructs that listening takes a "prepared soul, an alert mind, an open Bible, and a receptive heart" ("How to Listen to a Sermon," January 2002, accessed September 28, 2016, Reformation 21.org).

The Not in the Scope of This Thesis-Project

This thesis-project will not examine a comprehensive theology of preaching, but rather will focus on the theological and biblical framework for a theology of planning a preaching calendar and a process for preparing sermons. It will assume the primacy of preaching in an evangelical context. It will not focus on unifying a whole worship service around Scripture and preaching, although this is more easily done when planning ahead, as it will be a natural outgrowth. Other aspects of preaching, such as speaking with or without notes, topical or expository, length of sermon, preaching different genres, research for sermons and other aspects related to proclamation,[29] are worthy of further consideration but cannot be covered in this thesis-project with any depth. Some of these aspects will also examined in chapter 5.

---

[29] A pastor's spiritual preparation is key to effectiveness but less measurable. J. Kent Edwards assesses, "Deep sermons cannot be preached by shallow people. Profound sermons only come from people who enjoy a profound relationship with God. The condition of our personal relationship with God will control our public ministry for God" (Edwards, *Deep Preaching* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005], 43).

Chapter 2

Theological and Biblical Foundations

While examining a more comprehensive theology of preaching would provide the groundwork for planning and preparing sermons, it is too broad for the focus of this thesis-project. It is a well-trod path with many travelers,[1] and therefore will be surveyed in a more brief treatment. Focusing on the theological and biblical rationale for sermon planning[2] will be helpful for showing how they fit into a broader theological and biblical framework. This will be the focus of chapter 2.

---

[1] Various discussions on a theology of preaching are plentiful. A sampling that spans the theological spectrum includes Karl Barth, *Homiletics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox), 112-43; Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1992); Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985); Fred Craddock, "A Theology of Preaching," in *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 51-65; John R. W. Stott, "Theological Foundations for Preaching," in *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 92-134; Graham Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), especially "What Is Biblical Theology" and "What Is Preaching" (22-45); Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, eds., *Listening to the Word: Studies in the Honor of Fred B. Craddock* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox, 1993); Jason Meyer, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); James Kay, *Preaching and Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007); Michael Pasquerello, *Christian Preaching: A Trinitarian Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002); Robert Duke, *The Sermon as God's Word: Theologies for Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980); Donald English, *An Evangelical Theology of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996); and Robert Webber, "A Biblical Theology of Worship," in *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 65-85.

[2] I will focus primarily on biblical precedence of constructing a preaching calendar rather than on preparing sermons. While there is broad overlap in the two regarding general principles, specific biblical material on preparing sermons does not exist and would not be helpful to try to extrapolate based on Scripture.

General Theology: God Speaks, Preachers Speak

Scripture's opening narrative describes God's first act as one of creative grandeur in speaking into existence the heavens and the earth fashioned, in the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "by the word of his power."[3] Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, and 26 all reflect God using words to communicate. God further uses words after creating humanity by blessing them and giving the creation mandate in Genesis 1:28. In Genesis 2, God gives life to humanity by the breath of his mouth. God's speaking is in contradistinction to false gods being unable to speak, and God's ability to communicate with words is a consistent, ongoing biblical theme. God speaks to Abraham, Isaac, and Moses.[4] The prophets are given their charge with "Thus says the Lord."[5] Ezekiel's vision begins with seeing the glory of the Lord as he "heard the voice of one speaking."[6] Jesus was the Word made flesh.[7]

Speaking, the act of communication, is fundamental to the God who formed the world. Mark Dever comments, "The God of the Bible is utterly unique, utterly singular, and utterly worthy of our worship; and one of the

---

[3] G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 22.

[4] Gen. 17:13; 26:2; Exod. 3:4-21 respectively.

[5] Is. 22:15; Jer. 2:2; Amos 1:3 are examples. The phrase "Thus says the LORD" appears 432 times in the Bible; see https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch.

[6] Ezek.1:28.

[7] John 1:14.

most important evidences for that is that fact that God speaks."[8] Dever

explains how pagan gods in the ancient Near East never acted in speech—

"only one God talked, and that was Yahweh, the God of Israel."[9] God in

Isaiah 41:21-24 functions as a Judge to noncommunicative deities by

demanding that they show proof of their existence by their speech. After their

failure to do so, God shows his uniqueness by his ability alone to speak.[10]

God acted decisively and displayed his uniqueness in speaking during

the exodus. Orienting Israel toward Yahweh worship,[11] God used speech to

reveal himself and his will to the covenant community. Robert Webber

observes, "God spoke to the people and made his will known to them, thus

showing that worship is not complete without hearing from the Lord."[12]

God Speaking in Relationship to Himself and Humanity

God himself exists in relationship. Trinitarian theology affirms this

and runs counter to an isolationist perspective that is devoid of

relationship.[13] Using creation as an example, God, unlike the gods in other

---

[8] Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 13.

[9] Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 15.

[10] See Is.44:6-8. This is not to say that this is the only way God communicates or that God limits himself to verbal communication. Psalm 19 begins, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

[11] Exod. 24:1-8.

[12] Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 21.

[13] Robert Lethan provides an excellent overview in *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, Theology, History, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004). See his discussion on *perichoresis* (178-80) and relationality in the persons (190-94). Also, Bruce Ware discusses the relational and communicative dynamics of a Trinitarian theology (*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005]).

ancient creation stories, did not need to go outside himself to create the universe. Instead, the Word and the Spirit were present at creation. Irenaeus describes this in anthropomorphic terms of the Word and Spirit being "his own two hands" in fashioning the cosmos.[14] God created by speaking (the Word) as the Spirit hovered over the chaos. Creation is a Trinitarian act, with God working by the agency of the Word spoken and the mysterious movement of the Holy Spirit. This unique relationship assumes communication at some level in the Godhead, whether verbal as our human minds conceive communication or not.

To be in relationship means to know and to be known. Communication is essential for this to happen, and words are the agency in which it does. Carl Henry reinforces the necessity of God's speaking for his being known by offering, "Had God insisted on remaining incommunicado we would know nothing whatsoever about him . . . the only confident basis for talking about God is God's revelation of himself."[15] Millard Erickson similarly comments, "God does not merely demonstrate through his actions what he is like; he also speaks, telling us about himself, his plans, his will."[16] John Stott makes the helpful addition of explaining how God's speech was related to his activity.

God not only spoke to Abraham but also explained his purpose and gave him the covenant of promise.[17] God did this at both an individual and

---

[14] Kevin DeYoung, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: No Christianity Without It," September 28, 2011, accessed October 10, 2016, blogs.thegospelcoalition.org.

[15] Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 18.

[16] Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 187.

[17] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 95.

corporate level. When freeing Israel out of Egyptian bondage, he commissioned Moses to teach and give them the Law. Stott summarizes by stating, "Scripture affirms that God speaks through historical deeds and through explanatory words, and that the two belong indissolubly together."[18] God speaks in words to people made in his image and likeness in a way that they can understand.[19]

God's speaking formed the foundation for how he related to humanity in redemptive history. Adam and Eve's interaction with God was not as much visual as it was verbal. God spoke and they responded.[20] To disrupt their relationship with God, Satan's attack angle is a communication one: "Did God really say…?"[21] Adam and Eve's broken relationship with God was due to rebellion on the basis of word communication; this defined their relationship with him. The incarnate Word of God repaired this broken relationship. It is in Jesus that God is most fully and perfectly revealed. The prologue to John's Gospel is dense theological language, but one theme is that if sinful human

---

[18] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 95.

[19] Even though not everyone has "ears to hear" (Mark 4), the bottleneck is not at the level of understanding. Augustine reinforces the fact that God's speech is intelligible to humanity, despite the extraordinary differences: "For how, indeed, would Christ be ready to be spent for their souls if he disdained to stoop to their ears? For this reason he became like a little child in the midst of us, like a nurse cherishing her children" (Greg Scharf, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016], 5).

[20] For more philosophical treatments on God speaking and acting, refer to Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). John Frame discusses the "media of revelation" in "God Speaks to Us in Events and Words," in his comprehensive *Systematic Theology: Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 534-61.

[21] Gen 3:1.

beings are to be in relationship with God the Father, it will only be through the Son who knows him perfectly and makes him known to us through his words. The opening of Hebrews traces this development by stating, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."[22]

Preaching: A Theology of the Word(s)

A theological foundation must form the bedrock of any discussion involving preaching and related matters such as planning and preparing for sermons. To forego the former is to sabotage the latter. Stott aptly observes, "Technique can only make us orators; if we want to be preachers, theology is what we need."[23] The act of preaching is using words to communicate, yet preaching is rooted in the more basic assumption that God speaks. This forms the necessary rationale and confidence in our preaching that God has spoken first, and that gives preachers the impetus to use their words to reiterate his. John Frame takes Deuteronomy 18:18-19[24] as an example to show how the prophet's words are God's words—so much so that he will discipline anyone who refuses to listen. God's words through the prophet are fully authoritative; the human element in no way diminishes their authority.[25]

---

[22] Heb. 1:1.

[23] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 92.

[24] "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name."

[25] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 534.

God speaking and preachers preaching happen in a chronological order but are more symbiotic in nature. Jeff Arthurs links the two in affirming, "A theology of the Word is synonymous with a theology of preaching. Hermeneutics is the foundation, homiletics is the outgrowth."[26] Albert Mohler exhorts, "Preach the word! That simple imperative frames the act of preaching as an act of obedience. That is where any theology of preaching must begin."[27] William Willimon ties theology to God's speaking and preaching by stating, "Preaching is a theological act, our attempt to do business with a God who speaks. It is also a theological act in that a sermon is God's attempt to do business with us through words."[28]

The most basic aspect of preaching is speaking: the preacher uses words as the medium to communicate.[29] Words used in preaching are not just ones that could be used in a speech in a non-church setting, but rather they

---

[26] Jeff Arthurs, interview with author, South Hamilton, MA, August 13, 2015.

[27] Meyer, *Theology of Preaching*, 14.

[28] William Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), 175.

[29] This is not to suggest that the communication process is all verbal or one way, from preacher to congregation. Rather, like the relational component of speech from God to humanity, there is also a horizontal aspect to preaching that assumes at some level engaged dialogue. Some theological traditions have more of a back-and-forth conversation during preaching, while others have a more one-way mode from preacher to congregation. For possibilities on dialogical preaching, see Peter Cooper, "Biblical Dialogue Preaching: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Interactive Sermons" (DMin thesis-project, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2009). Dever sees monologue in a sermon as more appropriate because it theologically symbolizes our spiritual state and God's grace. He states, "For one person to speak God's word while others listen is a depiction of God's gracious self-disclosure and our salvation being a gift . . . The act of preaching is a powerful symbol of that reality." Dever seems to advocate that the hearer is a (quiet) recipient (Dever and Gilbert, *Preaching*, 21). Cooper and Dever may not be at opposing views but rather by degree how much verbal engagement is involved as a responsive act by the congregation.

are words that are infinitely weightier. This is the case because of their origin

and for whom they speak. They are not just everyday, routine words, but

rather they carry the weight of the Speaker. It is through preaching that

God's voice is heard. John Calvin states, "Among the many excellent gifts

which God has adorned the human race, it is a singular privilege that he

designs to consecrate himself the mouths and tongues of men in order that

his voices may resound in them."[30] Stephen Webb echoes Calvin's sentiment

in less lofty languages in asserting, "We were created to not only listen to God

but to speak on God's behalf."[31]

As the Second Helvetic Confession draws out, the preaching of the

Word of God is the word of God.[32] Martin Luther believed that God once

spoke literally to the prophets and others, but today God's voice is mediated

by a human voice reading God's Word or preaching the gospel.[33] The

preacher's words are not some second-rate mode of delivery, but rather God's

own voice is heard through the herald and has a sovereign reign aspect to it.

Preaching is heralding the divinely authorized proclamation of the message

of God to men, it is the exercise of ambassadorship. To put it simply, God

---

[30] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 4.1.5.

[31] Stephen Webb, *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of* Sound (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 189.

[32] "Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is preached . . . the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; who, although he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God abides true and good." Second Helvetic Confession, 1.4[4], 53, in *The Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Distribution Services, 1999).

[33] Carl Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 33.

speaks and preachers speak. Repeating God's words after him is preaching's central task. Those entrusted with the task of preaching are conduits of the voice that spoke in Eden as servants of the Word.[34]

This is a theme that runs throughout Scripture. It gives preaching its basis in the gathered church's life[35] and is rooted in a theological conviction that the God of the Bible's exclusivity lies in his speaking. This speaking points to a God who is a relational, personal being who enjoys not only relationship in the Trinity but also desires and initiates relationships with his created humanity. This good news is shared by the preaching of God's Word. Fred Craddock uses arresting imagery regarding sharing the good news in that it is to be "shouted from the rooftops"[36] when outlining his theology of preaching:

It is the position of the theology…that the New Testament, which carries the Word as both a whisper and a shout, is best interpreted if one understands God's Word as being heard as a whisper and spoken as a shout. That is, at the ear the word of faith we preach is a whisper, for revelation is

---

[34] R. C. H. Lenski details this reception-proclaiming dynamic by detailing how the preacher is a *kerus*, "herald," whose function is to make a loud, public proclamation, "one that has been given to him by a superior" (*The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1946], 244).

[35] Peter Adam notes how the sermon is the only time the church community hears God's word collectively as a body where God is present among his people to speak to them about their common life. "Sunday is the weekly moment when God's people meet God's Word that is mediated by the preacher. This is of unique importance when God's people gather around God and hear him speak to them through the Spirit-inspired Scriptures" (*Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996], 146).

[36] From Matt 10:27: "What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs."

not simplistic and obvious, but at the mouth it is a shout…what we preach is public proclamation.[37]

Good news is to be shouted!

Stott summarizes well this discussion of a wider theological lens through which preaching can be viewed as an act of repeating God's words. It captures the essence of the theological rationale and impetus for preaching:

> Here then is a fundamental conviction about the living, redeeming, self-revealing God. It is the foundation on which all Christian preaching rests. We should never presume to occupy a pulpit unless we believe in this God. How dare we speak, if God has not spoken? By ourselves we have nothing to say.
> To address a congregation without any assurance that we are bearers of a divine message would be the height of arrogance and folly. It is when we are convinced that God has spoken that we must speak and not remain silent. As Paul expressed, "Since we have had the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, 'I believe, and so I spoke', we too believe, and so we speak." The "spirit of faith" to which he refers is the conviction that God has spoken. If we are not sure of this, it would be better to keep our mouth shut.
> Once we are persuaded that God has spoken, however, then we too must speak. A compulsion rests upon us. Nothing and nobody will be able to silence us.[38]

Applied Theology: Preachers Plan Preaching,
Preachers Prepare Sermons

The preceding discussion sought to make the fundamental theological assertion that God speaks and preachers are to speak God's words after him. Inherent in this important responsibility is a seriousness that the task demands; it is not one that is taken lightly or in a flippant manner. Preaching therefore is a high priority in the pastor's call and rightly occupies a significant amount of time.[39] It also seems intuitive that there is a correlation

---

[37] Craddock, *Preaching*, 51.

[38] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 96.

[39] A 2012 survey conducted by LifeWay's Thom Rainer indicated the following weekly time spent on sermon preparation: less than 5 hours: 8%; 5-7 hours: 23%; 8-

between the perceived importance of a task and the amount of time spent on it. Skills and effectiveness in preaching are accompanied by focused attention. A theme in Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers: The Story of Success* is the "10,000 Hour Rule." Gladwell claims that achieving world-class expertise in any skill is a matter of practicing that skill correctly for a total of ten thousand hours.[40] While Gladwell has been criticized for oversimplifying complex social phenomena when examining achievement, the point that focused time is needed for facilitating skill is obvious.

When looking at sermons, time spent in planning and preparing sermons is analogous. When preaching is deemed vital and worth pursuing, there will be focused forethought and time and energy spent honing the craft. This backdrop leads to the discussion of how theological perspective and biblical example give credence to planning preaching.

Theological and Biblical Foundations for Planning
Preaching and Preparing Sermons

When seeking to marshal biblical support and build a biblical rationale for planning preaching and preparing sermons, there is not much material from which to draw definitive conclusions. The New Testament has little instruction that deals explicitly with corporate worship. There are no passages that detail what exactly happened when the followers of Jesus gathered together to worship that could be considered normative and

---

10 hours: 25%; 11-15 hours: 23%; more than 15 hours: 21% ("Pastors and Time in Sermon Preparation," June 8, 2015, accessed October 10, 2016, Lifeway.com). More attention to this area will be given later in the thesis-project.

[40] Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), 23-29.

prescriptive for today. Robert Jamieson, when discussing the regulative

principle of worship, highlights this tension when he states, "Discerning what

the Bible teaches on worship takes some finesse, since Scripture nowhere

presents us with, for example, a complete, confessedly normative 'order of

service.'"[41] Webber concisely concludes, "There is no single highly developed

statement on worship in the New Testament."[42]

This is not to suggest that there were no corporate gatherings for

worship. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:23 speaks of "the whole church [gathering]

together,"[43] and Acts 2:42-46 relates how the early church came together and

practiced their newfound faith in Jesus as Messiah. The author of Hebrews

speaks of "not giving up meeting together."[44] Taking the New Testament

record into account, there is not much instruction, and even when gatherings

are mentioned, they are never described as worship. In fact, there seems to be

a move away from defining worship in terms of place and outward forms.

John Piper describes the main word for worship in the Old Testament,

hishtahvah. This verb's basic meaning is to bow down with a sense of

---

[41] Robert Jamieson, "Biblical Theology and Corporate Worship," August 20, 2014, accessed October 10, 2016, https://9marks.org/article/biblical-theology-and-corporate-worship.

[42] Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 41.

[43] While Paul does not give what we would call an order of service, he does delineate major aspects of Christian worship here in 1 Cor.14 and in 1 Cor. 12. "When you come together," he wrote, "each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation" (1 Cor. 14:26). In 1 Cor. 14:13-17, Paul also refers to praying, singing, giving thanks, and responding with the "Amen." In 1 Cor. 12:7-11, he describes the word gifts and the speaking in tongues and subsequent interpretation.

[44] Heb.10:25.

reverence, respect, and honor, and occurs 171 times.[45] The Greek word for worship in the New Testament that borrows from *hishtahvah* is *proskuneo*. *Proskuneo* occurs 26 times in the Gospels when people would worshipfully bow down before Jesus and 21 times when the elders and angels are described as bowing down before God. However, *proskuneo* only appears one other time.[46] Piper then references John 4 to show that Jesus was identifying himself as the true temple. In doing so, he is pointing attention away from worship as a localized event with outward ritual to a more personal, spiritual experience with himself at the center. The orientation is that place is not the issue, or a sacrificial system or outward forms, but what happens "in the Spirit and in truth."[47] He summarizes: "In the New Testament, worship is being significantly de-institutionalized, de-localized, de-ritualized. The whole thrust is being taken off ceremony and seasons and places and forms; and is being shifted to what is happening in the heart—not just on Sunday, but every day and all the time in all of life."[48]

Jamieson agrees by stating, "Worship is not something we mainly do at church on Sunday. Instead, worship should suffuse our entire lives. For the Christian, worship is not confined to sacred times and places because we are united by faith to Christ, the one who is God's temple and we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, making us individually and collectively the temple of God (I

---

[45] John Piper, "Worship God!", November 7, 1997, accessed October 10, 2016, desiringgod.com/series/worship-god.

[46] 1 Cor.14:25.

[47] John 4:24.

[48] Piper, "Worship God!"

Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19, Eph. 2:22)."[49] However, Webber cautions to not make too strict of a distinction here. He agrees that Jesus Christ is the focus of worship but does not jettison what Piper calls outward ritual, ceremony, and forms:

> These institutions of worship foreshadowed the worship of the New Testament. Some falsely assume that the worship of Israel was physical and the worship of the church should be spiritual. This is a false dichotomy that fails to recognize the overlap between the content of the Old Testament (the Exodus event) and the content of the New Testament (the Christ event). Worship in the Old and New Testament has both spiritual and physical aspects . . . Old Testament principles are still found in Christian worship. The radical difference is that they are informed by the event of Jesus Christ, the main content of Christian faith.[50]

This overview of New Testament worship is important for the present discussion. If worship services are not described in detail and the circumstances that formed them or the elements present within them or even the physical location and redefinition of worship is debated, how much less can one be confident regarding the specifics of planning worship services and preaching specifically? Therefore, it must be acknowledged that for the purpose of speaking definitively regarding a biblical mandate for planning a preaching calendar or biblical instruction on how to formulate sermons, no such directives exist in Scripture.

Old and New Testament Practice

This does not mean that Scripture is silent regarding the general tenor around proclamation and how it functioned in Israelite worship and in the early church. The following will examine Old Testament influence on early

---

[49] Jamieson, "Biblical Theology and Corporate Worship."

[50] Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 38.

Christian worship and worship today in order to draw inferences for planning preaching.

At the outset, it should be noted that a strict dichotomy between Old and New Testament worship practice is not necessary, as Jesus Christ prefigures Old Testament worship practices.[51] G. K. Beale traces the theme of tabernacle and temple across the Bible's entire story line. Beale advocates that Revelation 21:1-3 is best understood as an eschatological temple that finds its roots in Old Testament worship practice.[52] Keith Drury outlines the origin of synagogue worship and its influence on early Christian worship and worship today:

Synagogue worship had a massive influence on early Christian worship, where praying and expounding the Scriptures became the first half of the Christian worship service . . . The synagogue service is an Old Testament prayer-and- Scripture stream running directly into early Christian worship. Most churches today would not consider having worship without Scripture-preaching or prayer playing an important part. We can thank the synagogue for this.[53]

With the temple's destruction in AD 70, the synagogue provided a place of gathering that was the local hub of religious identity for diaspora

---

[51] For a fuller discussion see Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, especially chapters 1-4 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1991).

[52] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 312-18.

[53] Keith Drury, *The Wonder of Worship: Why We Worship* the *Way We Do* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2002), 214.

Jews. In synagogue, there was prayer and daily Torah reading. With Constantine, cultic life changed.

Constantine built churches from an existing civic space that was known as the Roman meeting house building, a basilica model with a nave. Christians then added a cross and Mass as the central ritual at predetermined times. The Protestant reading of the Word then replaced Mass. This was the ritual that provided the reason that people gathered together: it was their iteration of a "worship service."[54] James White discusses how Jewish synagogue worship influenced Christian worship: "The church adopted much of the Jewish rhythm of time and the mentality that made such a rhythm a means of remembering . . . Jewish structures of worship and underlying mentalities made Christian worship possible."[55] In sum, early church worship grew out of the soil of synagogue practice.

Old Testament worship practices ultimately find their fulfillment in Christ. Jamieson comments:

> The turning point in the storyline of Scripture is the incarnation of God the Son, our Jesus Christ. All God's promises are fulfilled in him (2 Cor. 1:20). All the Old Testament types—the institutions of the priesthood, temple, and kingship, the events of the exodus, exile, and return—find their fulfillment in him . . . In order to understand the whole Bible's theology of worship, we have to understand how Jesus fulfills and transforms the Mosaic covenant.[56]

With Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament liturgical practice, the New Testament and specifically the Pastoral Epistles are a natural place to

---

[54] Bryan Bibb, interview with author, Greenville, SC, August 26, 2016. Dr. Bibb is the associate professor of Old Testament at Furman University.

[55] James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 142. For a comprehensive discussion on synagogue worship, see Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971).

[56] Jamieson, "Biblical Theology and Corporate Worship."

have a more focused analysis on how worship and preaching interplay with a sermon schedule.

Even though the New Testament does not give a robust view of the early church's worship life, we can be confident that preaching was present when believers met together.[57] Hughes Oliphant Old comments, "From the very beginning, the sermon was supposed to be an explanation of the Scripture reading."[58] The New Testament speaks to its importance and centrality in worship,[59] and Ligon Duncan states its prominence for his particular theological perspective: "The preached Word is the central feature of Reformed worship."[60]

The theological rationale that God speaks and therefore preachers are to be instruments to voice his Word makes preaching undeniably biblical. Stott comments, "That preaching is central and distinctive to Christianity has been recognized throughout the Church's long and colorful story, even from the beginning."[61]

The Bible does describe in general terms the herald's preparation, whether Old Testament prophetic activity or New Testament kerygmatic

---

[57] Jamieson characterizes corporate worship in the new covenant with the following elements: reading and preaching Scripture (1 Tim 4:14) singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs together (Eph 5:18-19; Col 3:16); praying (1 Tim 2:1-2, 8); celebrating the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt 28:19; 1 Cor. 11-17-34); and stirring up one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24-25). Jamieson, "Biblical Theology and Corporate Worship."

[58] Philip Graham Ryken, Derek Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III, eds., *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reformed Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 66.

[59] Rom.10:17; 2 Tim. 4:2

[60] Ryken, Thomas, and Duncan, eds., *Give Praise to God*, 67.

[61] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 16.

proclamation. However, this was on a more personal and spiritual level and not at the mechanical or practical level of sermon construction. For example, Moses was in exile in Midian for a "long period"[62] before encountering the burning bush and returning to Egypt. Jesus, after his baptism by John, spent forty days fasting in preparation for the tempter and before beginning his preaching ministry.[63] Paul, after losing his vision on the Damascus road, needed to be led "by the hand . . . for three days"; Acts relates during this time he was praying.[64] He then spent several days with the disciples before preaching in the synagogues.[65] In defending his apostleship and calling, Paul recounts that during his travels in Arabia and Damascus, were when God set him apart to preach Christ among the Gentiles. He indicates that this was for three years before meeting Peter in Jerusalem as he went on "preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."[66]

These three examples show that there is biblical precedent for a time of preparation before preaching takes place. In the case of Jesus and Paul, preaching is specifically named. For Moses, his call from God was to confront Pharaoh and to continue to fulfill God's plan in redemptive history. While this does not speak directly to a model of these three planning in the way

---

[62] Exod. 2:23. Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin interprets this as forty years (Acts 7:30).

[63] John 4:1-17.

[64] Acts 9:7-11.

[65] Acts 9:19-20.

[66] Gal. 1:11-24.

that Western minds think of the term, it nevertheless indicates an arrangement that served as the groundwork for proclamation ministry.

Also, one must not make too much of a distinction between the idea of sermon planning and preparation that is tangible (i.e., scheduled) and the process of preparation in which spiritual maturity is being fashioned and sanctification is in view. The two are not mutually exclusive but complement each other. A preacher's life lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ provides the necessary foundation for preaching. J. Kent Edwards highlights this relationship between the preacher's soul and how it affects sermon quality when he notes, "Deep sermons cannot be preached by shallow people. Profound sermons only come from people who enjoy a profound relationship with God. Like it or not, the condition of our personal relationship with God will control our public ministry for God."[67] It can be concluded that in the cases of Moses, Jesus, and Paul, before engaging in public ministry there was a preparation time that focused on their relationship with God.[68]

A less certain claim asks, "Is developing a long-range preaching plan biblical?" Two passages that speak directly to what is most equivalent to preaching today, 2 Timothy 4:2 and 2 Timothy 2:15, will be examined to seek to address this question.

---

[67] J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go Beyond the Superficial* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2009), 43.

[68] While the preacher's spiritual preparation is not the subject of the current thesis-project, there are aspects within it that necessitate spiritual formation. Activities such as discerning where the congregation's needs are in planning sermons and in prayer during preparation require spiritual sensitivity and spiritual discipline. For a thorough treatment on spiritual practices for the preacher, see Bruce Epperly, *Tending to the Holy: The Practice of the Presence of God in Ministry* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009).

2 Timothy 4:2

Second Timothy 4:2 provides a starting point for planning when Paul commands, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." Does Paul's statement to Timothy speak more toward the immediacy of preaching or lean toward a more planned program for preaching the Word? What does he mean by "be prepared"? Can this be linked to planning in general? C. H. Lenski translates e*phistemi* and the remaining phrase as "stand in hand in good season, in no season."[69] The verb is intransitive and therefore has no object; it denotes more of a state of readiness. It is an aorist imperative active that in context denotes a summary occurrence without regard to the amount of time taken to accomplish the action.[70] This would point to a general state of preparedness that assumes planning. The idea that Paul was communicating to Timothy was that he was to be prepared with the Word when conditions were favorable and when they were not;[71] the Word is "everlastingly in season."[72] Risto Saarinen points out that, contra Greek rhetorical conventional wisdom that placed a premium on timing and when rhetoric was to be best received by the listeners, Paul was instructing Timothy to ignore these conventions and speak the truth irrespective of what might be the best moment. He called Timothy to put his trust in the preached

---

[69] Donald Guthrie similarly translates *ephestemi* as "to be ready, to stand by, to be at hand" (*Pastoral Epistles* [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989], 166).

[70] Lenski, *Pastoral Epistles*, 214.

[71] Relatedly, there is the idea of Jesus and the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4 where the seed was spread indiscriminately. Preaching is not dependent on or determined by degree of receptivity.

[72] Lenski, *Pastoral Epistles*, 212.

Word and not rhetorical skills or timing. The overarching movement of Paul's instruction here is that the giver of the "word gift" is prepared to do so at all times.[73] Therefore, the herald is ready to preach regardless of listener readiness.

To be prepared, "ready,"[74] to "stand at hand," implies prior thought to the task one is engaged in, heralding, or preaching. This is planning at its most basic level. There is also a hint of this state of readiness that harkens to the thought of guarding, much as a soldier might do. While the immediate context of 2 Timothy 4 does not tie this phrase specifically to a military metaphor, Paul does link 2 Timothy 2:3-6[75] to metaphors that assume prior preparation. The soldier-athlete-farmer schema in this passage all point to a previous disciplined effort to carry out successfully their responsibility—the soldier trains, the athlete plans his exercise regimen, the farmer reaps his prior prearranged sowing. Natural and necessary to this is the assumption that planning and preparing are taking place. It would be nonsensical not to assume so. Also, the other passage's imperatives, "correct, rebuke, and encourage," describe a variety of ways the preacher is to apply Scripture to people's lives. This would be challenging for Timothy to carry out without previous preparation and planning.

---

[73] Lenski, *Pastoral Epistles*, 212.

[74] English Standard Version.

[75] "Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops" (2 Tim 2:3-6).

J. Winston Pearce challenges preachers to not avoid planned preaching, what he would call "to stand at hand," on the grounds of spontaneity; "there is a difference between being ready to preach and being prepared to preach."[76] Kenneth Wuest concurs here in stating, "The exhortation is for the preacher to hold himself in constant readiness to proclaim the Word."[77] While this speaks toward the preacher's spiritual preparation, it does not have to be exclusively so. Thinking about content, turning it over in one's mind, and meditating on Scripture passages that will be preached on all legitimately point to Paul's idea of being ready.

On balance, the conditions of "in season and out of season" in 2 Timothy 4:2 cannot be stretched to artificially force the phrase into the "in season" being a worship gathering with preaching present.[78] The text does not allow this idea. A general readiness is more in view. John Chrysostom strikes the right tone when he comments, "Be timely! Let it always be your season, not merely . . . when sitting in church. But let instruction about the love of truth from above have no set hour—let all the time belong to it."[79]

---

[76] J. Winston Pearce, *Planning Your Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1967), 1.

[77] Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 25.

[78] Guthrie notes that this phrase cannot be restricted to preaching but encompasses all of Timothy's varied ministerial tasks (*Pastoral Epistles*, 166).

[79] Peter J. Gorday, ed., *Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Ancient

Christian Commentary on Scripture, Thomas C. Oden, gen. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 271.

2 Timothy 2:15

A second often-used passage related to preacher's task is 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best[80] to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." In this passage, there is a self- disciplined diligence in view. Paul is encouraging an embodiment of the truth against the backdrop of the false teachers in Ephesus. This was Paul's last letter[81] and was to be taken seriously and given full attention and energy by Timothy. For him to handle correctly the word of truth demanded an engagement that was not impulsive or that could be excused as simply "depending on the Holy Spirit."[82]

Calvin explains "a workman who does not need to be ashamed" in a helpful visual, physiological translation, "a workman that does not blush." He comments:

> [Paul] bids them not be lazy disputants, but workmen. By this he indirectly reproves the foolishness of those who so greatly torment themselves by doing nothing. Let us therefore be "workmen" in building the Church, and let us be employed in the work of God in such a manner that some fruit shall be seen; then we shall have no cause to "blush"; for, although in debating we be not equal to talkative boasters, yet it will be enough that we excel them in the desire of edification, in industry, in courage, and in efficacy of doctrine. In short, he bids Timothy labour diligently, that he may not be ashamed before God.[83]

---

[80] Guthrie better translates this phrase "be diligent" from *spoudazo* (*Pastoral Epistles*, 148).

[81] The letter's genre is similar to a farewell discourse which Paul wants Timothy to heed for the rest of his life and ministry—the last word from a spiritual father (*ESV Study Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011], 2336).

[82] The letter's genre is similar to a farewell discourse which Paul wants Timothy to heed for the rest of his life and ministry—the last word from a spiritual father (*ESV Study Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011], 2336).

[83] John Calvin, *The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951), 147.

A workman's shame at his work's shoddiness is to be avoided; this again naturally links planning and preparation to avoid such a fate. Second Timothy 2:15 counters any notion that the preacher today is to open the Bible's pages and speak without any forethought or planning. This cannot be what Paul had in mind.

<div align="center">

Acts and the Pastoral Epistles:
Located in Specific Ministry Contexts

</div>

When examining the purpose and occasion for why 2 Timothy was written and its specific genre, one then can have a better framework for dealing with inevitable challenges from Scripture that present more on-the-spot examples of kergymatic proclamation. For example, Peter's sermon in Solomon's Colonnade (Acts 3) or Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7) were more extemporaneous events that could not have been planned for in the traditional sense of preaching as experienced in the weekly, gathered assembly of worship. However, what is happening in redemptive history in Acts (as well as the Old Testament prophetic corpus) is qualitatively different from what is happening in Ephesus in 2 Timothy.

In Acts, God was establishing the church. Acts is a map of the church's progress into the ancient world, showing how the present age began. The apostles found themselves in a pagan culture that had no knowledge of or exposure to the good news of Jesus Christ. There was necessarily an apologetic edge to their message where the gospel confronted Roman law courts as well as Greek philosophers.

Christianity's relationship to Judaism is also a major focus. The fledging faith needed to establish its legitimacy in which they were the authentic voice of Judaism despite opposition from the Jewish community.

Luke in Acts develops this by highlighting the fulfillment of Old Testament motifs.[84]

Another theme in Acts is world evangelization. Craig Keener notes how the whole book is structured around the gospel's advance, beginning in Acts 1:8. "For Luke," he explains, "the ultimate goal is cross cultural communication and world evangelization, and the requisite power to carry out the task is only the Holy Spirit."[85] This being the case, the gospel's power in penetrating that specific cultural and religious milieu was important and even necessary. The Holy Spirit's manifestation at Pentecost as the church is getting started is distinctive from Timothy's context of challenging false teaching in Ephesus in an already established church setting. The *Sitz im Leben* is important here; there are different circumstances and therefore functions to proclamation, and different possibilities as to how preaching is formulated, for what purpose, and for what specific audience.

In contrast to Acts, Paul in 2 Timothy is writing his final letter to his young protégé while Paul is imprisoned in Rome. The letter is dominated by the themes around persecution from outside the church and false teaching from within. It is Paul's final exhortation to a young minister that instructs him to focus on the Scriptures and the sound doctrine contained in them. Therefore, the nature of preaching is going to take a different shape based on the specific contexts.

---

[84] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 176-77.

[85] Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 322.

This is important to distinguish for this study because it has implications for how pastors are to go about their task today. There could be an appeal to the prophets and apostles and aforementioned passages in Acts as justification for eliminating any need for planning preaching. In these instances, there was a spontaneous and extemporaneous character to proclamation that did not have a programmed plan attached to the preaching. However, this fails to take into account the specific situations in which the prophets and apostles found themselves. Apostolic preaching and teaching, whether in Acts or elsewhere, was motivated by and found its expression in the process of establishing the early church and the urgency of taking the gospel message to unbelieving people who were unfamiliar with it. Apostolic authority rested in the fact that the apostles had been with the Lord. They experienced Jesus' ministry firsthand in seeing such events as his miracles and hearing him teach and preach. Their message was often reporting what they saw and heard as the Lord Jesus sent them out himself.

Paul, in writing to Timothy in the already established church, had different concerns than those reported by Luke in Acts. To put it obviously but necessarily, Paul was not instructing Timothy as a prophet or even an apostle. Timothy was not an eyewitness to the Lord's ministry. The prophetic word and apostolic preaching served more of a revelatory function, whereas Timothy's charge was more explanatory in nature to an already established church. This being the case, Timothy's context is the most analogous to pastors today where there is an encouragement to diligence in preparation.

General Theological and Biblical
Foundations on Planning

It seems impossible to conceive of a God who does not act according to his own eternal planning. God acts with deliberate actions that fit into his wise purpose and sovereign will. This is seen in the opening chapter of the Bible: God is shown to be a God who plans. The creation narrative of Genesis 1 poetically illustrates the creation's intentionality with God's forming days and creating specific elements within those days. Many places in Scripture could be highlighted to demonstrate God's forethought and planning. However, three will suffice to show that planning is one of God's basic characteristics and is part of his nature.

First, in Is 46:9-10 the prophet states, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'" Second, Paul writes to the church at Ephesus that God "has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ."[86] Third, when Peter addresses the crowd in Acts concerning Jesus' crucifixion, he locates this event in God's design: "This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge."[87] As those created in God's image,[88] planning is a natural part of our humanity.

---

[86] Eph. 1:9-10. Indeed, Jesus' coming was according to God's plan: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law" (Gal 4:4).

[87] Acts 2:23.

[88] Gen 1:27.

Jesus and Paul

The arc of Jesus' and Paul's ministries is indicative of a plan. When his mother urged him to perform a miracle at the wedding in Cana, Jesus responded, "My hour has not yet come."[89] There was a plan and an appointed hour for the revelation of his power. This was a plan he carried out even when it meant his death: "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out to go to Jerusalem."[90]

Jesus followed the custom of the synagogue that had set (planned) readings. One sees this in Luke 4:

> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it was written . . . Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.[91]

Scholars differ as to the nature of how Jesus got to Isaiah 61 in the Lukan account. How standardized synagogue worship was in this period is uncertain. The general pattern of worship included private prayer, the Shema, then the center of synagogue worship, and the Scripture readings (a word of exhortation and benediction followed).

The first reading was from the Pentateuch and was from a fixed scheme of lections. An Aramaic paraphrase accompanied this reading. The second reading was from the Prophets. In later times, this too was on fixed lectionary, but it is a matter of dispute whether this system existed in Jesus' day and what form it took. Leon Morris highlights the ambiguity when he

---

[89] John 2:4.

[90] Luke 9:51.

[91] Luke 4:16-20.

comments, "It is safest to assume that there was some freedom of choice of prophetic reading in the first century."[92] While some scholars see a three-year reading cycle here as typical, Ray Summers does not see this as likely.[93]

Was Isaiah 61 the scheduled reading for that particular Sabbath day or did Jesus select it from his own initiative? Darrell Bock explains how Jesus takes the scroll and unrolls it to the place where he will give instruction. He believes Jesus chose the reading from the prophets and "found" (*heuren*) the place in Isaiah from which he wanted to teach. He comments, "If the text was part of a fixed reading schedule, then the scroll would have been opened at the appropriate place. This detail suggests that a reading schedule was not used, but that Jesus chose his text."[94] William Hendriksen concurs in translating "unrolling the scroll he found the place" as indicating Jesus choosing the text rather than a fixed reading program.[95] The suggestion that the scroll opened by chance to the appropriate place according to I. Howard Marshall is "is alien to stress on the initiative of Jesus."[96] Origen attributes Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61 to divine providence rather than a type of Jewish lectionary: "It was no accident that he opens the scroll and finds the chapter of the reading that prophesies about him . . . This

---

[92] Leon Morris, *The New Testament and the Jewish Lectionaries* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1964), 11-34.

[93] Ray Summers, *Commentary on Luke* (Waco: TX, Word, 1972), 92.

[94] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 281.

[95] William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 119.

[96] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Pasternoster, 1978), 321.

too was an act of God's providence."[97] Jesus as a visiting rabbi could have been given Is 61 as part of the normal Sabbath-by-Sabbath plan that made up first-century synagogue practice. He then would be expected to comment on the predetermined text.

The ambiguity surrounding worship practice here in Luke 4 and in the New Testament in general makes one hesitant in prescribing a specific practice or mandating a certain form for today. However, the record does show, regardless of the specific instance with Jesus here in the synagogue, that having a structure to synagogue and passages that were predetermined was common practice and good for the worshipping community. A similar principle is true for today.

Paul's apostolic ministry entailed planning. One example is found in Romans 15:20-28[98] as he carried out his calling as apostle to the Gentiles. His plan was to preach the gospel where it was unknown. He then developed a specific plan to accomplish this. He first would take a gift to Jerusalem, then he would go to Rome to establish a western base, and from there he would go to Spain. God's overruling Paul's plans is not an indictment against the plan

---

[97] Arthur Just Jr., ed., *Luke*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Thomas C. Oden, gen. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 328.

[98] "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation . . . This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you . . . But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem . . . So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way" (Rom 15:20-28).

but rather God's freedom and wisdom in doing so.[99] Paul also adhered to synagogue worship and its prescribed liturgical elements, including Scripture reading:

> Paul and his companions…went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak." Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!"[100]

Proverbs[101]

A theme in Proverbs under wisdom's umbrella is planning. Solomon features the ant as a planner whose forethought provides for its needs in winter.[102] To "give thought to [one's] steps" is prudent,[103] and planning is assumed in other places in the Proverbs. For example, Proverbs 15:22 teaches, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed," and Proverbs 16:13, "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans." The woman described in Proverbs 31 is a model planner at the daily level as well as the longer term. Proverbs 31:15-16 states

---

[99] This redirection resulted in Paul writing Romans. This was ultimately God's plan through Paul.

[100] Acts 13:13-16.

[101] As wisdom literature, Proverbs is a natural place to look at planning. Old Testament narrative sections would provide many examples of planning. For example, Moses led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness according to a plan; Joshua was strategic in conquering Canaan; Mordecai and Esther made a plan to gain a hearing with King Xerxes for Haman's downfall; Nehemiah acted according to a strategy for his revitalization project in Jerusalem.

[102] Prov. 6:6-8: "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise. It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest."

[103] Prov.14:15.

that she "gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard." She could not assign tasks if she did not have a plan about what was to be accomplished on a daily level, and the larger activities of buying a field and planting a vineyard would not be possible without an overall plan for the household's operation.

Proverbs teaches that careful planning garners wisdom and not to plan is foolish and dangerous. The book also makes this clear even when the planner does not know if his strategies will come to fruition. God's control of the future is not a reason not to plan, but rather an invitation to commit plans to the Lord and trust him to establish them according to his purposes.[104]

Proverbs 16:9 offers wise counsel when thinking about the balance of planning sermons that allows for flexibility and yet encourages structure: "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD determines their steps." This is the preacher's posture. He does not clutch too tightly his predetermined sermon schedule. He also does not give any thought or concerted effort to "being prepared in season and out of season" to preach; the general tenor of Scripture is to make plans and lay them in God's hands. Dan Dumas combines the practical aspects of planning with the theological in stating, "Make your plans in pencil. In fact, you should make your plans in

---

[104] James warns against presumption in plans where God is left out: "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'" (4:13-15).

pencil and hand the eraser to God. He reserves the right to edit at will, and his will to edit is absolutely sovereign."[105]

Conclusion: Benefits and Cautions

Nothing but the simplest impulse is accomplished without some forethought that is called a plan. This is true from what we eat for dinner to the homes we live in; conceiving plans is the way our world works and is woven into the fabric of creation. The benefits of planning can be applied to the current thesis-project. Planning in advance and having a preparation process for preaching is a good idea based general principles from Scripture.

However, one must exercise caution. Making too many inferences and assumptions can stretch Scripture further than warranted. There are examples of planning that involve non-preaching events as well as the prophetic word where prior planning and a sequential process were most likely not present; in some cases, they could not be present based on the situation's spontaneity. Also, planning can be emphasized in some theological and ecclesiastical traditions more than others and can be culturally contextual.[106] There is a broad difference in a Reformed setting that has a tendency to conduct business "decently and in order"[107] and an Assembly of

---

[105] Dan Dumas, "A Theology of Planning, Part III," accessed October 10, 2016, http://dandumas.com/blog/2014/1/6/a-theology-of-planning-part-iii.

[106] Planning can also be viewed as more of a modern Western concept (Arthurs, interview with author).

[107] From 1 Cor. 14:40 (New King James Version). This phrase is used in the Presbyterian Church (USA) Government section of *The Book of Order*. The fact that there exists such a reference in contrast to a Pentecostal/Charismatic context is noteworthy

God setting that stresses immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the act of preaching.[108]

Is planning and preparing for living life in general a biblical concept? Yes. Are these two activities specifically tied to preaching in the Bible? No. Is it a good idea to be diligent in planning and preparing for preaching? Yes. How others have conceived and written about these tasks will be the focus of chapter 3.

---

[108] Joe Andino, interview with author, South Hamilton, MA, August 14, 2015.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

How have scholars and practitioners in the homiletics field written about planning a preaching schedule and a sermon preparation procedure? Are there common practices, steps, and elements that are present and seemingly universal? Where do they intersect and where do they diverge regarding method when conceiving of both planning and preparing sermons for preaching?

This chapter will interact with these questions in seeking to find a comprehensive foundation in which planning and preparing sermons flow. This will be done in two stages: The first is to survey the leading books on preaching over the last few decades to evaluate how these authors envisage the planning and preparing process. In doing so, the author will interact with these books that speak more specifically to planning and preparing sermons and will highlight similarities and differences. Finally, the author will discuss other general areas of convergence and divergence among the surveyed books.

Contemporary Texts on Planning Preaching

The two main texts I will use for examining planning preaching are Scott Gibson's *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers* and Stephen Rummage's *Planning Your Preaching*: *A Step-by-Step Guide for Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar*. These two more recent works incorporate current realities in preaching as well as draw on classic

texts to formulate a comprehensive vision for planning a preaching schedule/calendar.

Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*

Scott Gibson emphasizes a pastoral focus where discipleship happens through sermons.[1] His goal is to "help people mature in Christ through preaching."[2] *Preaching with a Plan* moves with the double purpose of reminding the preacher that he is also a pastor, and shepherding real people is a part of his call. Planning preaching for real people is an act of caring for the congregation.

One of the book's strengths is that Gibson gives many examples, both historical and modern, of how preachers accomplish this task through their preaching plans. Not surprisingly, this reveals that no two pastors are alike in how they do it; no "one size fits all." He wisely instructs that a preaching plan, whichever one a pastor chooses to adopt, needs to fit the preaching context.[3] He is insightful on assessing a congregation's needs and gives helpful directives as to how to do this.[4] Gibson's instructions on planning a preaching calendar are outlined in Appendix A.

---

[1] Scott M. Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 14.

[2] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 126.

[3] "Discipleship sets the agenda for preaching . . . this is the reason one must be cautious in the application of various programs for preaching, be they lectionary, continuous reading, or series. These plans may be valuable in building disciples or they may become hindrances. The thoughtful pastor needs to evaluate their suitability for a particular preaching context" (Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 44).

[4] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 89-90. As most scholars are in agreement with taking into account listener needs, Daniel Overdorf has a different perspective, particularly as it relates to what Gibson is after—spiritual maturity. After giving a nod to listener needs, he states, "A preaching schedule driven by the Bible rather

Gibson also discusses the lectionary when examining preaching calendars and plans. In chapter 3, he overviews the lectionary historically and makes helpful commentary on *lectio selecta* and *lectio continua,* as well as the Christian year versus the calendar year. He never quite tips his hand as to his preference. Responding to the question, "Will a congregation gain through preaching through the lectionary?" he offers the disclaimer that God's Word will not return void, but "one wonders if following the lectionary has been as beneficial to the variety of churches and people as it has been assumed."[5] I would have wanted Gibson to be more definitive in his assessment of following the lectionary. My assumption would be that he would not, as a general practice, encourage its use. One of the main emphases of *Planning Your Preaching* is that the pastor-shepherd assesses his flock's needs that move them toward discipleship. An outside program that assigns predetermined passages philosophically and methodically misses this more local, specific goal.

Gibson's lectionary discussion gives options for those who follow the lectionary as they plan preaching. He elucidates in broad strokes some advantages and disadvantages associated with lectionary use.[6] While a detailed discussion is not within the scope of this thesis-project, others who have considered the lectionary's use in planning preaching and have varied perspectives could be consulted by the pastor who wants to explore further

---

than perceived needs will, over the long haul, stimulate greater maturity in the church" (Daniel Overdorf, *One Year to Better Preaching: 52 Exercises to Hone Your Skills* [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013]), 22.

[5] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 35.

[6] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 31-37.

this tool for sermon planning.[7] David Currie articulates a helpful summary of lectionary use in an evangelical context that gives voice and balance to the discussion:

> With all its benefits and limitations, the lectionary is simply a human convention. Yet, so are all other methods of choosing preaching texts. Scripture does not give us clear, definitive instructions for making our selections, so preachers are free to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
>
> Sometimes, the Spirit leads the individual through prayer and reflection; other times through suggestions drawn from congregational leaders, members, the unchurched, or broader cultural trends. Using the lectionary as one method for choosing our texts for the public reading and exposition of the Scriptures allows an historic, significant tradition of God's people to inform and shape our preaching, guarding against our personal, congregational, denominational, or national idiosyncrasies. In thus proclaiming the whole counsel of God, we may more effectively equip the saints for the work of ministry, building up the body of Christ.[8]

Some traditions, while not specifically having the history and structure of the lectionary, nonetheless follow set passages and a program for teaching and preaching.[9]

An aspect of *Preaching with a Plan* that I questioned was Gibson's advocating tagging a "spiritual age" label on a congregation in order to wrap

---

[7] William Carl, "Planning Your Preaching: A Look at the Lectionary," *Journal for Preachers* 4, no. 3 (Easter 1981): 13; Shelley Cochrane, "The Christian Year and the Revised Common Lectionary: Helps and Hindrances to Worship Planners and Preachers," in *Preaching in the Context of Worship*, ed. David Greenhaw and Ronald Allen (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 65-67; Thomas G. Long, "Preaching the Lectionary," in *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship*, ed. James Berkley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997), 54-55; David Currie, "Preaching from the Lectionary: An Evangelical and Expository Approach," Papers for the Meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Gordon-Conwell Theological, October 16-19, 1997.

[8] Currie, "Preaching from the Lectionary," 8.

[9] See, for example, the Southern Baptist Convention's long-standing *Explore the Bible Series* through LifeWay Christian Resources. The series is broken into quarters, and Bible books are worked through continuously with content resources provided; accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.lifeway.com/n/Product-Family/Explore-the-Bible.

a preaching plan around it.[10] In chapter 4 he describes a church's spiritual age in seven categories, from infant to older adult.[11] My question would be how is that determined? The categories seem arbitrary and too static. While he reminds readers that most of the New Testament books are letters written to congregations, not individuals,[12] churches are made up of individual people whose "spiritual age" is a moving target that is difficult at best to find the "wide middle." He quotes Kent Hunter to explain how every congregation has a unique personality and philosophy of ministry, but this is qualitatively different from spiritual maturity.[13] Personality has more to do with social dynamics and perhaps history of that particular church while spiritual maturity deals with spiritual formation and discipleship. Stuart Briscoe is noted as observing, "Sitting in my congregation on any given Sunday are a multitude of . . . levels of maturity and orientations."[14] Gibson explains, "There are different levels and layers of spiritual maturity in any congregation. At the same time, congregations vary from one to another.

---

[10] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 26. My question would be how is that determined?

[11] Robert Stephen Reid, "Faithful Preaching: Connecting Faith Stages with Preaching Strategies," *Papers of the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics* (December 1907), 153-63, serves as the foundation for the spiritual age grid Gibson employs.

[12] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 70.

[13] See Phillip Douglass' *What Is Your Church's Personality: Discover the Ministry Style of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008) for a specific examination of church personality. Douglass personality orientations but does not link this to a church's spiritual maturity as Gibson seems to do.

[14] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 18.

Some are mature, while others are less spiritually vibrant."[15] It would be helpful here to define or describe what a spiritually mature congregation looks like and how that is measured or discerned. This is true not only with how Gibson frames planning preaching, but also speaks to the larger question that tries to answer whether preaching is effective or not.

Gibson's rationale for preaching is described in the introduction: "For growth of men and women and boys and girls in the faith…to stretch believers to expand their faith as they grow in grace …Christlikeness… mature in their faith."[16] Later, Gibson asks the same question at the beginning of chapter 5 as in his introduction: "Why do we preach sermons anyway?" He expands his descriptors here to include "new life in Christ, godliness, saintliness."[17] Though certainly the definitions are not a science, giving some ways to gauge growth, maturity, and Christlikeness would be both informative and interesting. He comes close when he offers Dallas Willard's assessment on a way to look at spiritual maturity: "Many churches are measuring the wrong things. We measure things like attendance and giving, but we should be looking at more fundamental things like anger, contempt, honesty, and degree to which people are under the thumb of their lusts. Those things can be counted, but not as easily as offerings."[18]

---

[15] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 19.

[16] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 13.

[17] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 95.

[18] Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 95.

Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*

Rummage's motivation is not to teach how to preach a "home run" sermon, but rather focuses on a lifetime of being consistently effective and faithful to God's Word that goes beyond this Sunday's sermon.[19] The book takes a long view of proclamation[20] and offers the preacher goals and a clear strategy for where preaching is going and why.[21] To determine preaching strategy and therefore plan in advance, rather than try to ascertain the spiritual maturity or spiritual age of a congregation, he divides the congregation into those who are Christians and those who are unbelievers.[22] Rummage instructs pastors to understand their congregation[23] by analysis[24] and congregational needs.[25] The result is that the preacher is better prepared to plan for sermons that address those needs.

---

[19] Stephen Nelson Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching: A Step-by-Step Guide for Developing a One-Year Preaching Plan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 12.

[20] "Think of the great preachers of history—men such as Charles Spurgeon, Alexander Maclaren, Henry Ward Beecher, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Billy Graham, and others. Although we might be able to name an individual sermon preached by any of these men that was especially strong, none of them was defined by one great sermon. They each attained success as preachers through a lifetime of consistently effective preaching" (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 11).

[21] Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 34.

[22] He encourages pastors to discern between different services and seasons of the year to determine roughly those who might be Christians and non-Christians (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 48).

[23] He notes that from a communication perspective, "the audience is the most important element in preaching" (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 39).

[24] This takes into account size, demographics, gender, education, ethnicity, interest, attitudes, subject knowledge, and spiritual condition of the congregation (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 41-48).

[25] He divides congregational needs at two levels: institutional and personal. Institutional needs concern the church as a whole—from budgetary needs to lack of

Like Gibson, Rummage instructs would-be sermon planners to write preaching objectives based on needs and the biblical objectives of preaching. These objectives cover the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral waterfront. His Preaching Strategy Worksheet and Developing a Preaching Calendar are included in Appendix I. Rummage is more detailed and comprehensive than Gibson in the practical details of putting together a preaching calendar.

A strength of *Planning Your Preaching* is the solid thinking behind the practical guidance Rummage offers. In a discussion on the Holy Spirit's role in advance planning, he is "down the middle" for the present author. He reviews preaching luminaries such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones[26] and counsels that if the Holy Spirit leads the preacher to preach something other than he planned, "Preach something other than what you have planned.

The plan is not a master but a servant."[27] He in many cases does not flash his Southern Baptist badge and is conversant with other theological and denominational traditions. For example, Rummage is open to the lectionary and admits his early skepticism.[28] He also gives his personal perspective on

---

missions involvement. Personal needs are concerns in personal and family lives (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 49). Gibson also discusses the importance of church needs and pastoral needs to take into consideration when planning (Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan*, 88-89).

[26] "The right way to look upon the unction of the Holy Spirit is to think of it as that which comes upon the preparation" (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 24).

[27] Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 25.

[28] "Many of my earlier misconceptions and prejudices about the Christian Year were unwarranted. In fact, the Christian Year can be used effectively to guide the preaching in any type of church. Furthermore, the emphases of the Christian Year can be instructive and helpful to a pastor as he develops his own preaching plan (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 182).

the lectionary more than Gibson when he states, "The Christian Year commends itself to the pastor for many reasons. It is an ancient plan for ordering the annual worship and preaching of the church that follows the life of Christ, emphasizes the vital doctrines of the faith, and magnifies the Word of God. As such, it can be instructive and helpful for preachers from any type of church tradition."[29]

Classic Texts on Preparing Sermons

How does one decide on the most significant works on preaching to review in planning preaching and preparing sermons? The present author took *Preaching* magazine's 2010 survey of the twenty-five most influential preaching books over the last twenty-five years that have had the greatest effect on American preaching.[30] To be sure, this type of survey has inherent limitations. Coming from an evangelical publication, it will reflect its readership. Yet it does reflect theological and denominational diversity.[31] I have chosen to review the top seven books in the survey and will do so in order. This allows for diversity and gives a nod to the biblically complete and holy number seven. Every author's sermon preparation process is detailed in Appendix B.

---

[29] Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 199.

[30] "The 25 Most Influential Preaching Books of the Past 25 Years."

[31] There is a range of seminaries and divinity schools, theological and denominational, represented in the top seven books. However, the top seven books are all written by male, white, older practitioners and pastors. Fred Craddock and John Stott have died since the 2010 survey.

Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*

In his review of influential preaching books, Peter Mead moves Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* into its own room by stating, "In many respects, numerous other books on preaching are building on this one, trying to offer some clarification or slight adjustment."[32] Robinson's revered status on an ecclesial Mount Rushmore as the author of *Biblical Preaching* is set in stone (or rather granite).[33]

Sermon planning and putting together a preaching calendar do not occupy much space in Robinson's seminal work. To the question, "From what passage of Scripture should I draw my sermon?" he answers, "These questions need not be faced on Monday mornings six days before the sermon delivery. A conscientious ministry in the Scripture depends on thoughtful planning for the entire year."[34] Robinson goes on to provide broad counsel for advance sermon planning by stating,

> Those that are not in the traditions that use a lectionary can save time by investing time in a preaching calendar. Sometime before their year begins, they force themselves to decide, Sunday by Sunday, service by service, what passage they will preach…. While [expositors] relate the Scriptures to their people's lives in individual sermons, they know the importance of a preaching calendar that chooses broad topics or passages of Scripture that speak to the needs of their particular congregation.[35]

---

[32] Peter Mead, "Review: Biblical Preaching, by Haddon Robinson (2nd ed.)," accessed January 30, 2017, https://biblicalpreaching.net/?s=review+of+Haddon+Robinson+biblical+preaching.

[33] *Biblical Preaching* occupies the top spot in *Preaching* magazine's list. Editor Michael Duduit states Robinson's influence by surmising, "More than any other book of the past quarter century, *Biblical Preaching* has profoundly influenced a generation of evangelical preachers."

[34] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Sermons*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 54.

[35] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 54.

Robinson's contribution to the homiletics field with *Biblical Preaching* are his Big Idea concept, and his clear, systematized Ten Steps primer on preparing and developing expository sermons. Clarity is what he is after in the pulpit.

Critiques of *Biblical Preaching* have more to do with purpose. It is clear that it labors under the job of providing pastors with a roadmap to preparing sermons. As such, Robinson does not spend much time on constructing a preaching calendar, as noted above. However, what he glosses over in sermon planning he more than makes up for in sermon preparation. Robinson also does not spend much time on how to do exegesis— urging readers in a general sense to study commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and other study tools.[36] However, he could have given similar counsel as he does regarding sermon length with exegesis as it relates to the Big Idea: settling for a bird's-eye view of the passage rather than a worm's-eye analysis.[37] Robinson's work is not intended to be a defense of expository preaching and is more of a manual for how to do it. John Stott's *Between Two Worlds* would be a better place to find such a defense.[38]

---

[36] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 62-65.

[37] Since Robinson's method is more of a philosophy that encourages the preacher to see how words, phrases, and sentences relate and interrelate to each other to create an overall meaning for the passage, counsel from Robinson to not get lost in the weeds of individual words could be appropriate, perhaps a warning to not get stuck in what Arthurs and Pelton call "micro-exegesis," or the result of "painstaking examination of the trees while never lifting one's head to see the forest" (Jeffrey Arthurs and Randal Pelton, "The Rewards and Challenges of Teaching Robinson's Big Idea Method," *Papers Presented to the 2016 Evangelical Homiletics Society Annual Conference*, 78).

[38] See chapter 3, "Theological Foundations for Preaching," in John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 135-67.

Buttrick, *Homiletic*

David Buttrick's *magnum opus* is not the typical homiletics textbook. By far the most theoretical and sophisticated preaching book reviewed, it is, as the dust jacket endorsement from *Preaching* magazine suggests, "the most encyclopedic work in the modern period." Thomas Long is effusive with *Homiletic* as he believes that Buttrick "is onto something important… perhaps revolutionary."[39] With just south of five hundred pages of small-print text chocked full of slow-down-in-order-to-untangle prose,[40] it strives to understand how the preacher can intentionally form the message in the mind of the listener. Buttrick believes that preaching can be profound when the preacher has "a willingness to search deeply the actualities of consciousness"[41] and has helped preachers move from seeing sermons as a string of propositional points to conceiving preaching as a series of what he calls "moves"—set pieces in the sermon's architecture that allow the listener's mind to make progress from one idea to the next.

It is not surprising that Buttrick's philosophical and theoretical work on preaching as directed to "communal consciousness" and swimming in the phenomenology of language waters does not speak specifically of planning

---

[39] Thomas Long, Review of *Homiletic* in *Theology Today* 45 (1988): 111.

[40] For example, "In actuality, to borrow a phrase from Richard R. Niebuhr, we are all 'radical' people; that is, we internalize a social world fabricated out of a jumble of language, perceptions, slogans, and images. . . . We live in a shared world construct that have been internalized as is, therefore, always with us. In consciousness, there is always a self-in-a-social-world and a social-world-within-the-self. As we observed at the outset, self and society distinctions are mostly a matter of focus" (David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 420-21).

[41] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 33.

preaching in advance. He views preaching as mediation,[42] but he is not a go-between who hands out blank quarterly and yearly calendars to pastors for planning their sermons.

Buttrick does (somewhat) come in the back door of planning preaching in advance, or at least thinking about future preaching, in what he calls "Situations and Situations." He does not see that moments in life that have dimensions of depth should warrant attention in the pulpit. He comments, "If one plans preaching on that premise, however, we will end up with a list of topics to examine an incredible range of human experience."[43] He sees planned preaching as a response to "limit moments" and "decision moments" that could include an act of irrational violence where an entire family in the parish is wiped out. Here, a silent pulpit would be scandalous. Other situations that call for preaching attention he governs by three criteria.[44] Buttrick gives a tepid endorsement for the lectionary:

> Preaching forms congregational faith-consciousness. Therefore, most of the time in most of our preaching will probably follow the structure of the church year. The Christian calendar is designed, year by year, to rehearse the events of Jesus Christ, God-with-us. . . . If we preach from scripture, we will not be ignoring human situations. True biblical preaching is never remote from life in the world.[45]

---

[42] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 250.

[43] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 424.

[44] First, a situation has to connect with profound ontological or historical questions, where there are deeper issues at hand. This is to guard the pulpit from the trivial in the name of practicality or helpfulness. Second, a situation ought to relate to the store of unanswered questions which have been filed in consciousness by recurring limit moments or decision moments, crucial questions of meaning and morality. These are questions of ultimate meaning of being and deciding. Third, a situation ought to fit into the structure of Christian consciousness (Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 425).

[45] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 425.

There were parts of *Homiletic* that I found wanting that were both general and specific in nature. Generally, his rules come across more as dictums at times and seem too rigid and too specific. He could have a superior tone in his assessment of the "old homiletics." However, he never gives an organized critique and prefers instead to take sideswipes while giving his perspective.[46] Additionally, Buttrick's theological sensibilities and commitments need to be kept in mind, as they probably differ from an evangelical theological foundation. His theological presuppositions on the nature of Scripture are problematic,[47] but this does not seem to diminish his contribution on how language functions.[48] Others have critiqued Buttrick on his theological orientation, saying "no amount of technique can substitute for a living theological center."[49]

---

[46] For example, the traditional preaching mode of making points is captive to a rationalistic approach that does not take into account the way consciousness works (Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 23).

[47] Buttrick sees Scripture as "a good *gift* to the church, a gift of grace" (Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 248). Tim Sensing comments, "His own view of Scripture and the parables, in particular, strip the words of Jesus of their divine authority. Who is Jesus if there is no certifiable historical content concerning his life and teachings? The authority of the language event is found only in the Lordship of Jesus both incarnate and glorified" (Tim Sensing, "An Assessment of Buttrick's *Homiletic*," *Restoration Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1993): 43-53).

[48] Brian Larson is more cautious about Buttrick's work on moves and points in stating, "I am leery of any method developed by someone with a low view of Scripture. But I don't want to rule out the possibility of learning something even from such methods. Sometimes they contain truth about communication regardless of their foundation that can be built into a solid footing consistent with a high view of Scripture" (Brian Larson, "Moves and Points—Distinctions," in *Papers Presented to the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 2001 Annual Conference, 118-26).

[49] Ronald J. Allen, "*Homiletic* Review," *Encounter* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 76. Allen cites Arthur Van Seter's assessment: "Is the power of Buttrick's homiletical approach ultimately in theology or in the phenomenology of language?"

Moving to more of his core content, my question would be: Does Buttrick get a phenomenological language pass in *Homiletic*? Though I am not qualified to speak on scarcely known concepts as the phenomenology of language, philology, and in general how language functions, those who are would be welcome to do so.[50] I agree with Ronald Allen's assessment and would like to explore further how sermons are received by listeners in the decades since *Homiletic*.[51]

> I doubt that subsequent years of homiletical research and practice will accord imperial status to the program outlined in *Homiletic*. There are too many variables . . . ; e.g., theological dynamics, personal vitality, context, and perhaps even in the way consciousness forms from person to person and community to community. Homiletics has room for a pluralism of approaches as long as each approach communicates the gospel with power.[52]

Stott, *Between Two Worlds*

John Stott's *Between Two Worlds* popularized the pervasive metaphor used to describe the work of the preacher in today's world—God's messenger who has one foot planted in the biblical world and the other one in today's setting. This imagery has crystallized for preachers in how they conceive of their pulpit task. Indeed, "Preaching as bridge-building" is the title of chapter 4 and also could be the overarching theme of *Between Two Worlds,* as well as

---

[50] Ronald J. Allen, "*Homiletic* Review," *Encounter* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 76. Allen cites Arthur Van Seter's assessment: "Is the power of Buttrick's homiletical approach ultimately in theology or in the phenomenology of language?"

[51] While not desiring or able to explore in the depth that Buttrick requires, more manageable possibilities include papers supplied by the Evangelical Homiletics Society's annual conferences. Though now somewhat dated, EHS's 2001 theme, "Preaching and Technology," and the 2002 theme, "Preaching to Listeners: Connecting to Contemporary Audiences," and Dave McClellan's "Recovering a Sense of Orality in Homiletics" (2005) are good beginning points for listener reception of sermons.

[52] Allen, "*Homiletic* Review," 77-78.

Stott's contribution to the preaching field.[53] Concerning planning a preaching calendar, Stott does not speak specifically to such. He discusses what he calls his originally monthly, then weekly, "Quiet days." Precipitated by a nightmare that saw him halfway up the pulpit steps without a prepared sermon and encouraged by L. F. E. Wilkerson, Stott describes the shape and purpose of what he enters into his calendar book as "Q": "I keep them for those items that need unhurried and uninterrupted time—some long-term planning, some problem to think and pray over, some difficult letters to draft, some preparation, reading and writing. I could not exaggerate the blessing which these quiet days have brought to my life and ministry."[54]

Stott is more specific when discussing annual holiday as he describes preacher such as Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh. Whyte took as habit two to three summer months to plan a year of sermons and do much of the preparation. He acknowledges shorter holiday times (what Americans call vacation) also as pastors that have a wife and children. He offers as a possibility a deal Martyn Lloyd-Jones struck with his family: "They gave me the mornings to myself that I might do this [serious reading]. Then, having done that, I was prepared to do anything they proposed."[55] Stott believes that

---

[53] It is Stott's conviction that in preaching we always begin with the text in Scripture, both the text as it comes to us currently and the context in which it was written. We must know something of the original context if we are to know our own context, and that requires bridge-building. We as preachers must always build bridges between the text from thousands of years ago and our current contemporary context. This is the primary role of the preacher according to Stott: "A bridge is a means of communication between two places. It is across this broad and deep divide of two thousand years that Christian communicators throw bridges. Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women today" (Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 138).

[54] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 203.

[55] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 204.

the minimum any pastor should manage to study formally is taking every
week a four-hour block, every month a full day, and every year a week.[56]
While this is not for sermon planning strictly, the benefits of such a call to
study could relate to some sermon forethought and reading that would
benefit it in an overall way.[57]

Stott, "the closest thing to an evangelical pope,"[58] does explain a way
forward in preparing sermons.[59] Helpful and distinct in his model is an
emphasis on prayer; Stott combines prayer with study as a general
orientation to the preaching process. The sermon process of Stott, while not
as detailed as others, nevertheless provides a helpful framework for pastors.
Ever mindful of the essential spiritual focus of sermon preparation, it does
not get bogged down in technical matters.

Craddock, *Preaching*

Fred Craddock's legacy is seen in his thumbprint on a generation of
preachers who employ inductive approaches and story[60] in their preaching

---

[56] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 204.

[57] For Stott, a general posture of learning, reading, and reflecting aids
planning and preparing sermons. He articulates this disposition when he argues,
"Pastors belong in a study, not an office. The symbol of our ministry is a Bible—not a
telephone. We are ministers of the Word, not administrators, and we need to relearn
the question of priority in every generation"; see Albert Mohler, "Between Two
Worlds: An Interview with John Stott," accessed January 30, 2017,
http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/08/08/between-two-worlds-an-interview-with-
john-r-w-stott/).

[58] Collin Hansen, "John Stott: A Uniter and a Divider," February 29, 2012,
accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/february/john-
stott-biography.html.

[59] Appendix B details Stott's process.

[60] After preaching in the deductive mode that he surmised yielded minimal
results with his listeners, he started to preach inductively (he does not like the word

ministry,[61] eschewing the dominant deductive method that held preaching sway. Along with Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching*, Craddock's *Preaching* has been the staple preaching text used in seminary classrooms in the past forty years. A diminutive man in stature at 5 feet 5 inches, Craddock nevertheless casts a long shadow in the preaching world with what has been called the "New Homiletic"[62]—a paradigm shift movement of inductive, narrative, experiential approaches to preaching that are now common fare. *Preaching* offers a more eclectic style to homiletics, often laying out the options and describing the pros and cons of each approach.

In *Preaching*, Craddock implies advance planning in chapter 4, "The Life of Study." In this chapter, he is not talking about study for a particular sermon. Craddock encourages a pastoral life of the mind and a lifestyle that

---

because it sounds like a legal term) to more listener response: "While serving as a young pastor at a church in Columbia, Tennessee, I noticed that people responded more to my informal talks outside the church service than to my sermons. I started experimenting. What if I didn't structure the sermon like a legal argument but more like an extended conversation? The listener—not the preacher—would be challenged to give the sermon its meaning . . . I never took to preachers who tried to bulldoze people into converting . . . so I became a preacher who didn't preach" (John Blake, "A Preaching 'Genius' Faces His Toughest Convert," December 14, 2011, accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/27/us/craddock-profile/).

[61] Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985, 2010).

[62] For overviews and evaluation of the New Homiletic as movement and method, see Scott M. Gibson, "Critique of the New Homiletic," accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2005/august/129--gibson.html); Nathaniel Wright, "Preaching as Theology: A Historical Sketch of the New Homiletic's Native Theological Habitat," *Papers Presented at The Evangelical Homiletics Society's 2015 Annual Conference*; Wesley Allen Jr., "The Pillars of the New Homiletic," in *The Renewed Homiletic* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2010); and Clint Heacock, "A Critical Evaluation of Fred B. Craddock's New Homiletic," accessed January 30, 2017, http://preachersforum.com/a-critical-evaluation-of-fred-b-craddocks-new-homiletic/.

forms the foundation for critical and imaginative thought,[63] not a bucket for tossing sermon ideas into. In so doing, the pastor will be more effective when he does preach. "Not until a minister is persuaded that working in the study is being among the flock and not until the flock accepts that fact, can a ministry, and especially a preaching ministry, attain full stature and be consistently effective."[64]

Craddock focuses his attention on a general preaching plan when he instructs on selecting the preaching text. He gives freedom here but favors the lectionary. He outlines the advantages of planning ahead[65] with the primary reason (and reinforcement of the author's hypothesis) that "sermons preached in a planned preaching program are consistently better in every way than those planted, watered, and harvested in less than a week."[66] When the pastor has knowledge of preaching content for the future and does something as simple as making a file folder for each Sunday, his engaging in everyday life and input experiences acts as a magnet to which other related ideas and observations are drawn regarding the content/subject and are captured. As the specific preaching date draws near, the eureka is that "there

---

[63] "Study to the point of understanding sharpens rather than dulls one's appetite for and capacity to engage life with all one's faculties" (Craddock, *Preaching*, 75). This does not have an immediate utilitarian purpose, for "to read Flaubert for sermon illustrations would be prostitution" (77). Rather, "reading good literature enlarges one's capacities as a creative human being and has a cumulative effect on one's vocabulary, use of language, and powers of imagination" (79).

[64] Craddock, *Preaching*, 72.

[65] Noting reducing anxiety on what to preach on and offering a balanced preaching diet to the congregation, the sermon has had time to mature and can be delivered with more ease and freedom, and enables coordination with the worship service (Craddock, *Preaching*, 101).

[66] Craddock, *Preaching*, 102.

awaits the preacher a page of scribblings, from many sources and somewhat loosely related, but germinal and suggestive. With such a beginning, the heavier task of preparation in not only inviting but already underway."[67]

Evaluating *Preaching* would lead naturally to a New Homiletic critique. Though not within the scope of this thesis-project, a major aspect that affects sermon preparation is how one conceives sermonic form and the rationale for it. This determines how the sermon is put together. In broad terms, will a deductive or inductive method be used? Or, to use Craddock's perspective, is the message more of a legal argument or an extended conversation?

Therefore, a critique on Craddock's work focuses on the open-endedness of *Preaching*. A proposition-less, shrouded application sermon (which proponents of Craddock do not always practice themselves)[68] that allows listeners to finish for themselves can be treading on thin ice. Are preachers affording too much to the listener and risking too much? The emerging church movement,[69] in which clerical prestige and privilege are lowered to enable the congregation to be a part of the act of sermon

---

[67] Craddock, *Preaching*, 102.

[68] See Barbara Brown Taylor, "The Right Answer," sermon on Luke 10:25-37. She gives her answer to the parable of the Good Samaritan by ending her sixteen-minute sermon with, "Given the choice of passing by on the other side or being moved to pity, the answer is as clear as a bell: Do love, and you will live." Accessed January 30, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wds3OxzHNAI.

[69] The emergent church is all but dead today. See Michael Patton, "What Do You Think Happened to the Emerging Church," accessed January 30, 2017, http://credohouse.org/blog/what-happened-to-the- emerging-church; and Url Scaramanga, "R.I.P. Emerging Church," accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/september-online-only/rip-emerging-church.html.

composition and design, raises the blood pressure of many card-carrying evangelicals. Doctrinally unclear, ethically ambiguous, and evangelistically vacuous would be grenades lobbed across the bow by evangelicals. Statements such as "seeking objectivity in biblical interpretation and sermons can both destroy community and the chance to experience new truth together"[70] is like throwing raw meat into shark-infested waters for many evangelicals; it is a dog that won't hunt. Or preach.

Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*

Inventor H. B. Reese was seen as a confection revolutionary in bringing together chocolate and peanut butter to form the best-selling candy brand in America, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.[71] Sidney Greidanus in *The Modern Preacher* seeks to bring together hermeneutics and homiletics in advocating for a new holistic method for both: "a Christocentric interpretation…has definitive implications for sermon application for today."[72] Christocentricity could sum the whole of his work that builds on his doctoral dissertation[73] and is sharpened in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*.

---

[70] Clint Heacock, "Forty Years On: A Critical Reflection of Fred B. Craddock's New Homiletic," January 26, 2017, accessed January 30, 2017, http://preachersforum.com/a-critical-evaluation-of-fred-b-craddocks-new-homiletic/.

[71] Arthur Reese, *Reese's Peanut Butter Cups: The Untold Story* (New York: iUniverse, Inc, 2008).

[72] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Bible Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 121.

[73] Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock) 1970.

Modern Preacher organizes hermeneutical concerns (chapters 1-5) and homiletical issues (chapters 6-12) in a comprehensive manner. Both sections offer much that is valuable to the preacher. However, to one looking for planning sermons in advance the now retired professor of preaching at Calvin Seminary speaks more generally than intentionally.[74]

Greidanus's thoughts on selecting a text for preaching, considerations in preaching different biblical genres, and steps for sermon preparation are helpful in their detail and depth. His discussion of relevance was a needed corrective for the present author. Greidanus's directive is spot on that it is not the preacher's job to make the text relevant but rather to show the inherent relevance of it; the preacher is a communicator of relevance, not a creator of it. He reminds that the power of God's Word stands alone without human aid, and preachers are given the privilege of pointing people to it. Some will take exception to Greidanus's negative view on topical preaching.[75] His view of Scripture's historicity can be construed as wobbly.[76]

---

[74] One infers planning in advance from *Modern Preacher*. For example, Greidanus sees value in addressing congregational needs (184) and encourages lay participation in preparing sermons to help insure a dialogical element in sermons (185). Both presuppose that the pastor has planned where he is going as to a schedule as a result of assessing and in view of lay participation in the process.

[75] Greidanus labels them unbiblical in a chart on page 12 but pivots just a bit in later explaining, "although it is possible to preach topical sermons that are biblical, in actual practice they often turn out to be flights of fancy which have little or nothing to do with biblical thought" (Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 15).

[76] He is solid in stating, "There are good reasons, therefore, to approach the biblical text not with doubt but with confidence in its historical reliability" (Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 46). Although he never denies historicity, he offers an interpretive angle as the more important matter: "Does the historicity of Job…make any difference for the interpretation of the book?... the question of historicity is of no hermeneutic consequence . . . the point of the story is made whether a historical figure or not" (Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 95).

As is the case with *Christ-Centered Preaching*, critique on *Modern Preacher* is leveled on theological and biblical grounds that have an impact on the sermon, specifically, how one crafts sermon application. There are a few considerations that naturally flow out of theological choices. Derek Thomas sees a Greidanus sermon as one long on detailing the flow of redemptive history but short on application and preaching to the heart Syndrome.[77] Indeed, there can be predictability, the Sausage Factory[78] Syndrome that leads to boredom. Sinclair Ferguson notes the deficiencies in a possible formulaic approach, as "it is likely to produce preaching that is wooden and insensitive to the rich contours of biblical theology."[79] David Prince succinctly summarizes an overall evaluation when looking at the Christocentric, thirty-thousand-foot view:

> Greidanus mentions the whole of the Old Testament throbs with a strong eschatological bent, but his method does not consistently point to the overarching goal of the cosmos, the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom of Christ. His Christocentric method is more horizontal than vertical and methodologically does not adequately reckon with the most

---

[77] See Derek Thomas, "Expository Preaching," in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 78.

[78] Per a conversation with Dr. David Currie in a Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary "Pastor as Preacher" Doctor of Ministry residency, the dynamic of a Christ-centered approach tends to flatten Scripture's varied texture. This has the effect of sausage production: pork, beef, or veal is ground with fillers (breadcrumbs, spices, etc.), then dumped into a casing, emulsified with a protein solution, and *Voila!*—sausage. Similarly with a Christocentric approach, it does not matter what the content; it always comes out the same: *Jesus*.

[79] Sinclair Ferguson, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Developing a Christ-centered Instinct," *A Proclamation Trust Media Paper* 2 (London: Proclamation Trust, 2002), 5.

foundational connection between the Old Testament and New, that all things are eschatologically summed up in Christ (Eph.1:10).[80]

<div align="center">

Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*

</div>

Bryan Chapell's aim in *Christ-Centered Preaching* is to teach pastors how to prepare expository sermons that reveal Scripture's redemptive aims. A pithy summary for the book that takes into account this redemptive focus from Chapell's perspective could be, "Biblical preaching is Christocentric preaching."[81] Or, in his words, "authority and redemption are the words about which the whole of this work could be wrapped."[82] *Christ-Centered Preaching* is distinctive in that it incorporates significant theological discussion within a volume that contains all the technique elements found in standard homiletic texts, an appreciated strength.

While Chapell's arrow is trained on the target of preparing expository sermons, he does speak to preparing sermons in advance and gives practical wisdom on how to do so. Though not providing quarterly calendars with spaces for sermon titles and Scripture passages or detailing a packing list for a sermon planning retreat, he assumes pastors will think ahead for their preaching.

He explains how experienced pastors set aside time each year to look back and forward: a backward survey to what preaching has covered and what the congregation has encountered, and a forward anticipation in regard

---

[80] David Prince, "Evaluating Sidney Greidanus's Approach to Christ-Centered Preaching," accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.davidprince.com /2015/02/04/evaluating-sidney-griedanuss- approach-christ-centered-preaching/.

[81] Chapell states, "Expository preaching is Christ-centered preaching" (280).

[82] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 11.

to what the congregation needs to know or experience. A view to educate and prepare people for life's spiritual challenges leads pastors to a variety of topics and away from ruts. Chapell advocates the summer months to plan for the preaching year. Planning preaching offers practical benefits such as setting folders aside that serve as magnets that draw ideas and inspiration from reading and everyday life experience.[83]

What does Chapell propose that preachers plan for and preach on? Shepherding a congregation will yield a depth of needs and challenges to consider. Broad doctrinal principles that give congregation members the perspective they need with instructions from Scripture are advised. Chapell assumes advance planning when he discusses preaching options such as the lectionary and *lectio continua*. He summarizes the options and gives his perspective on text selection:

Whether a lectionary, a personal agenda, a worship committee, a book sequence, or community pressures influence the text you select, you must take care to prepare people for the matters they want you to address and those they would never choose to face. Both congregational and pastoral appetites may need to be curbed and refined in order to meet this goal, lest a steady diet of what one considers chocolate cake malnourish everyone.[84]

---

[83] This sermon file becomes a rich resource for the sermon when it is preached. It also serves as a buffer against feeling like nothing has been done for the sermon and captures ideas and insights that would otherwise be lost (Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 64). Chapell is similar to Craddock's routine in this regard.

[84] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 65. His overall preference for preaching is the sermon series: "Series greatly aid a pastor's preparation and subject scope. Still, series generally work best when their duration is reasonable, [he advocates a "few months at a maximum" earlier in the chapter], their sermons are not too dependent on one another, and the subjects and/or approaches differ from those of recent series" (67).

Chapell defines a sermon as having unity,[85] purpose,[86] and application.[87] *Christ- Centered Preaching* teaches the fundamentals of preparing, organizing, and delivering sermons. Chapell balances principles and practice well throughout, supplementing chapter content with questions for review and exercises at the end of each chapter to reinforce learning. He also is generous with figures, tables, and charts that further crystallize concepts and give visual punch to what can be thicker conceptual content. His helpful appendices cover the waterfront on preaching's general tasks—some give broad brush strokes while others go into more intricate detail.[88]

Chapell's other contributions to the field of homiletics expose the reader to two features that he develops "double helix metaphor"[89] and the

---

[85] Chapell sings in the Big Idea choir here by advocating that sermons can only be about one thing and theme, and have one unifying concept that can be stated by the preacher in one sentence.

[86] Unique to Chapell is what he calls the "Fallen Condition Focus" (FCF). The FCF is "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or for whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage" (*Christ-Centered Preaching*, 65). This forces the preacher to focus on what his listeners share in common with the first recipients.

[87] The "So What?" question that the preacher must answer. Chapell goes into preaching mode himself here where he emphatically states application's essentiality: "The message remains uncooked without thoughtful, true to the text application . . . a grammar lesson is not a sermon. A sermon is not a textual summary, a systematics discourse, or a history lesson. . . . Preachers who cannot answer a 'So What?' will preach to a 'Who Cares?' We are not ministers of information, we are ministers of Christ's transformation" (Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 218).

[88] Chapell's Appendix 3 (345), "Sermon Preparation Pyramid," is a summary of steps involved in preparing sermons and is more general in scope, while Appendix 5, "Divisions and Proportions" (350), details sermon components, standard time in minutes allotted to complete each component, and amount of space on a typed page each one should take.

[89] A summary on preaching's process, Chapell explains the balance of explanation, illustration, and application (Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 261).

"Fallen Condition Focus."[90] He helps the preacher understand the place and purpose of Scripture's different periods, persons, and events within redemptive history and not simplistically "leap-frogging to Christ" in the sermon.

Weaknesses in *Christ-Centered Preaching* tend to land on the theological side of the net rather than the technical, homiletical side. Although Chapell stands on the shoulders of Reformed biblical theologians Geerhardus Vos and Edmund Clowney, he has been critiqued as lacking their eschatological construct.[91] Specifically, Gary Findlay differentiates between Chapell and Vos on the former's two-world cosmology. He states,

> The two worlds of Vos are very different from those that Chapell describes. Vos believes in the world that is and is to perish, and the world that is to come. Sin has taken its toll on the former world corrupting it and alienating it from God those who belong to it. Thus, it is reserved for destruction. The latter world is heavenly, eternal, and incorruptible. What separates the perishable from the imperishable is man's sin.[92] While Chapell remains forever busy looking for a bridge[93] with which to apply ancient principles to

---

[90] Chapell plants the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) in creation-fall-redemption soil. It is a "bad news, good news" dynamic: Without the bad news and hopelessness of our sinful, fallen nature, there is no rationale to present the good news of Christ Jesus. He defines the FCF as "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those for whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him" (Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 50).

[91] David Prince, "Evaluating Bryan Chapell's Approach to Christ-Centered Preaching," accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.davidprince.com/2015/01/28/evaluating-bryan-chapells-approach-christ-centered-preaching/; and Gary Findley, "*Christ-Centered Preaching* Review," *Kerux*: Northwestern Theological Seminary 11, no. 1 (May 1996): 37-41. Chapell does not discuss the two-age eschatology that is central to the Christocentric method of Vos and Clowney.

[92] Findlay, "*Christ-Centered Preaching* Review," 38. He cites Vos, *Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker, 1979), chapter 1, "The Structure of Pauline Eschatology."

[93] This being Chapell's Fallen Condition Focus rubric.

the modern world, Vos finds the ladder that connects heaven to earth, God to his people. Christ is the ladder![94]

These two different cosmologies lead to different methods for applying Scripture. Chapell is charged with removing the meaning of Scripture as well as the contemporary audience from its history.[95]

Chapell's insistence on finding the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) in every passage is problematic for others. David Prince critiques the FCF and subsequently the Christ-focus of the text as being truncated. He observes, "When one reads in Chapell that our 'hope resides in the assurance that all Scripture has a Fallen Condition Focus' one might conclude that a depravity hermeneutic is central to Chapell's approach. The danger in this is a methodological transformation from an eschatologically oriented Christocentricity to anthropocentricity."[96]

Prince further questions Chapell's biblical theology moorings as not giving the eschatological pull of Scripture. He explains:

> Chapell's approach to biblical theology in preaching could cause some to have a flattened reading of Scripture. The primacy of the Fallen Condition Focus gives salvation, obscuring that the gospel message is the message of the kingdom (Mk. 1:15, Luke 4:43). . . . When one understands the Christian life eschatologically, biblical interpretation must begin with Christ, the eschatological man, and his eschatological Kingdom.[97]

---

[94] Findlay, "*Christ-Centered Preaching* Review," 39.

[95] Findlay, "*Christ-Centered Preaching* Review," 40.

[96] Prince, "Evaluating Bryan Chapell's Approach to Christ-Centered Preaching."

[97] Prince, "Evaluating Bryan Chapell's Approach to Christ-Centered Preaching."

Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*

Netflix, with seventy-five million subscribers, reported data touting that its members streamed 42.5 billion hours' worth of programming in 2015. Using these metrics, that is one hour and thirty-three minutes per day per person streaming television shows and movies.[98] Humans relate to stories. Eugene Lowry knows this and fashions *The Homiletical Plot* like a movie or play rather than a book.

The trailers show homage for rescuing tired sermons out of their straight-to-video, second-rate status.[99] He does this in quick fashion. Indeed, Lowry's work is svelte; it boasts low body fat with just 131 pages of seeing sermons as a narrative art form, a sacred story where preachers are artists. The sequel, released twenty years later, is really not a sequel, save a Foreword cameo by Fred Craddock. This shows its staying power in the field.

Lowry's camera is almost exclusively trained on sermon as narrative and takes up the entire 131 pages of *The Homiletical Plot*. This focus lands any substantive discussion on advance sermon planning in Lowry's director's cut. However, he does make B-roll concessions and assumes a year planning for preaching:

> We can identify two preliminary stages in sermon preparation that typically occur prior to the stage of sermonic formulation proper. The first is a state of "wandering thoughtfulness" about the Sunday morning sermon. Likely we have 1) jotted down notes about possible ideas, 2) read the lectionary passages for the day, 3) pulled out a file containing scattered notes written

[98] Victor Luckerson, "This Is How Much Netflix We're All Watching Every Day," *Time* (January 16, 2016), accessed January 30, 2017, http://time.com/4186137/netflix-hours-per-day/.

[99] "It is difficult to imagine what the last two decades of twentieth-century preaching would have been like without *The Homiletical Plot*," reflects Jana Childers of San Francisco Theological Seminary.

earlier when planning the year of preaching, and/or 4) checked the denominational calendar. But we still don't know much about next Sunday's sermon. Our task at this point is to gather and sort various possibilities. At best this stage is one of imagination; at worst it is the stage of anxiety.[100]

Also, in his discussion on the sermon at the intersection of problem (itch) and solution (scratch), he encourages pastors to spend considerable time here framing. To think about the "itch and scratch" dynamic of sermon conception, conceiving in advance is part and parcel of doing so.

A larger perspective that sneaks in the back door of advance planning is Lowry's thoughts on a "sermonic drought." This occurs when one is intentionally working on a sermon. Conventional wisdom binds here: "the harder we concentrate, the greater the power of the blinders."[101] "This power is particularly strong at that moment when we know we must begin work on a sermon but do not have any potential idea to mind."[102]

Like Craddock and Stott, Lowry offers a pervasive identity of pastoral calling and being that backfills a more organized effort at planning sermons in advance. He sees intentional study and engagement as, in the end, accomplishing the same goal of having the sermonic radar up in order to find sermon content when the preacher is not looking for it. He reasons:

When studying the Scripture for its own worth and our own sake (or in reading other material) the blinders of conventional thinking are not so strongly on guard. For this reason—in addition to other quite sufficient ones—it is imperative that every preacher engage systematically in a self-

---

[100] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 97.

[101] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 101.

[102] Lowry, *The Homiletialc Plot*, 101.

directed reading program which not only can help one become a better informed professional but also can provide the setting for such serendipitous revelation.[103]

Signing an artistic license contract to New Homiletic Productions, Lowry's work does serve as a sequel of sorts to Craddock's upset of the preaching apple cart. However, where Craddock was panned for ambiguity on how specifically to put together the sermon as story, Lowry read the reviews and did not make the same mistake, providing five-stage script,[104] the "Lowry Loop," from his director's chair.

Lowry is beneficial in presenting a solid case for thinking of sermons as horizontal rather than vertical, an event in time rather than in space, progressing in movement rather than a fixed point, and organically developed rather than constructed. His opening stage of encouraging preachers to upset the equilibrium is excellent and intuitive in how attention is gained. Because I have a daughter who is very involved in theater, his emphasis on the sermon as story with all its elements was familiar and appreciated. Lowry's theological convictions are evident but not heavy-handed.[105] He follows biblical precedent in elements such as the principle of reversal, referring to

---

[103] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 96.

[104] Scene 1: Upsetting the equilibrium, "Oops!", Scene 2: Analyzing the discrepancy, "Ugh!", Scene 3: Disclosing the clue to resolution, "Aha!", Scene 4: Experiencing the gospel, "Whee!", Scene 5: Anticipating the consequences, "Yeah!"

[105] At times, the United Church of Christ professor sounds downright Reformed Presbyterian when he discusses the preacher asking for human response. He says, "The covenant is initiated by the other side; our part is response and our response is even a gift . . . one does not 'find it' at all. One gets found!" (Lowry, *Homiletical Plot*, 83).

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as an example. His belief that the gospel is the resolution to the "Ugh!" is commendable.

Points of challenge for *The Homiletical Plot* till similar soil to Craddock's *Preaching*. First, a reader response grid can be problematic. Lowry's final stage is the anticipation of embracing the gospel once the sermon is over. The sermon acts as an invitation, an appetizer; treatment has only started—health is only a possibility. The hearers must decide what difference the gospel will make in their lives. The preacher does not exhort the congregation to live out the gospel in a specific way but rather invites authentic response. Much could be said,[106] but Paul's charge to Timothy to include exhortation in preaching is clear and therefore not to be avoided when appropriate.[107] Second, while a gospel emphasis is good, what is the content of Lowry's *evangelion*? His gospel view is not as robust as I hoped; at times it seems a thin, more amorphous "God has turned things upside down in Jesus." If one is looking for more forensic substitutionary language in Lowry's "Aha!", he will be hard pressed to find it in *The Homiletical Plot*. Third, does this more listener-centered approach leave enough room to explain the text? Lowry advocates spending the most time in Stage 2, analyzing the discrepancy, than in all the other stages combined. This might be good for a Spielberg- directed *Saving Private Ryan* but perhaps not for a

---

[106] The crux of which would center on the debate of where meaning/authority is found—the hearer or the text? Lowry would see the preacher deriving many different and equally valid interpretations for the same text, and the artistic pastor must then use his "imaginative creativity" to weave a dramatic re- enactment in order to add interest (Lowry, *Homiletical Plot*, 108).

[107] 2 Tim. 4:2.

sermon; having a framework for the Normandy invasion in World War II is essential.

As I read *The Homiletical Plot*, Lowry's sequencing a sermon seemed similar to Timothy Keller's outline for gospel-motivated sermons. Both follow an overarching "first the bad news, then the good news."

The Lowry Loop
Upset the equilibrium, "Oops!"
Analyze the discrepancy, "Ugh!"
Disclose the clue to resolution, "Aha!"
Experience the gospel, "Whee!"
Anticipate the consequences, "Yeah!"

Keller Method[108]
Plot winding up, *What you must do*
Plot thickening, *Why you can't do it* (Oops!, Ugh!)[109]
Plot resolution, *How he did it* (Whee!)
Plot winding down, *How, through him, you can do it* (Yeah!)[110]

---

[108] Keller, "Moralism vs. Christ-Centered Exposition." Keller and Lowry seem in the same zip code when Keller further explains, "The moral principle must be distilled clearly in every text. But then a crisis is created in the hearers as the preacher shows that this creates insurmountable problems . . . it is impossible to meet. The hearers are led to a seemingly dead end. Then a hidden door opens and light comes in. The sermon moves into . . . Christ-centered application when it shows how only Jesus has fulfilled this. (In narrative sermons, Christ is the ultimate example of the character. In didactic sermons, Christ is the ultimate embodiment of the principle.) Finally, the sermon points us how to repent and rejoice in Christ in such a way what we can live as we ought."

[109] Lowry parallels Keller here in stating, "the congregation must experience the utter futility of all the search before the good news is addressed to the matter and realize the sense of futility" (Lowry, *Homiletical Plot*, 76).

[110] Lowry's language describes Keller's "plot winding down" similarly: "The redeeming focus for change is to remove the necessity so that people [no longer need to look down on others]. This is exactly what the gospel of Jesus Christ provides. . . . We can now love ourselves because we are in fact loved by God. No longer having to

In General Conversation: Broad Touch Points

Concerning sermon clarity and narrowing to a dominant theme, Chapell agrees with Robinson's "Big Idea" concept, that listeners need focus, "a thought peg on which to hang the preacher's ideas."[111] Chapell uses Robinson's basic definition of expository preaching.[112] Greidanus concurs in his belief that each sermon should have single theme.[113] Buttrick, Greidanus, Long, and Craddock sleep in the same inductive, listener- centered, linguistic, rhetorical analysis bed.

Buttrick would not like Chapell's "each main point in a message . . . [takes an] average time of six minutes" because he does not believe in points, preferring "moves" instead, and does believe that six minutes is too long for a listener to hold a point/move.[114] He does not like propositions—unlike Robinson, Stott, Greidanus, and Chapell—but prefers "structures." He also would not be a fan of Andy Stanley's first destination on the relational roadmap (ME) that introduces self to listeners; the preacher seeks to lay out one's humanity and personal struggle to connect with listeners. Buttrick says

---

prove our own worth, we may now be set from making others prove themselves to us" (Lowry, *Homiletical Plot*, 86).

[111] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 45. Getting this comes from Robinson's "What is the author talking about?" and "What is he saying about what he is talking about?" Chapell offers, "These are the foundational questions of an expository sermon" (45).

[112] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 30.

[113] He defines a theme as "a summary statement of the underlying thought of the text" (Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 134) and fundamental to the preaching task (131); the theme of the sermon should be the theme of the text.

[114] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 33. Moves are blocks of thought or a single notion or a single conceptual idea and as such have a "shelf life" of three to four minutes.

this "splits consciousness" in hearers and offers, "To be blunt, there are virtually no good reasons to talk about ourselves from the pulpit."[115] He has small quibbles with homileticians reviewed in this chapter about titling sermons.[116] Buttrick and Lowry have big problems with the Big Idea/theme sentence[117] and would not, as Craddock does in a sermon,[118] conclude preaching with a question, as "sharp questions directly addressed to a congregation may not be used."[119] He warns against use of quotations,[120] whereas others reviewed welcomed them as supporting content. Buttrick typically would not find himself in the Christ-centered perspective but sounds Christocentric in his closing chapter of *Homiletics*, "A Brief Theology of Preaching." He lists five reasons why preachers preach that sound Christocentric—all five of them include Jesus Christ.[121] To those who would

---

[115] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 142. He earlier opines, "There has been a trend toward lengthy introductions. The trend seems to be prompted by the desire to relate. Many preachers are comfortable relating to a congregation without the burden of content. . . the ultimate subject of our sermons is the gospel and not ourselves or our relationship with a congregation" (86).

[116] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 424.

[117] For a fuller discussion, see Paul Scott Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 16-18.

[118] Preached on July 10, 2011 at Woodmont Christian Church, Nashville, TN. Craddock ends his "Jesus Saves" sermon with the interrogative, "Are you saved?" Accessed January 30, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OobgXCEtmes.

[119] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 210.

[120] His two main reasons are that listeners will not hear the quotation as preachers transition from their own voice pattern to quoted prose with its own syntax and pattern, thus causing listener "blanking." Also, quoted prose material is "language scribbled for the eye and is very different from oral language" (Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 144).

put all their eggs in the congregational needs basket in determining preaching, Chapell writes, "[Preachers] need to be careful that their pulpits are not simply captured by the currents of congregational desires. A ministry can be warped by lending too much of an ear to what people want to hear as it can by giving too much weight to what the preacher wants to preach (2 Timothy 4:3)."[122] Greidanus sounds like a New Homiletician when he agrees and develops Leander Keck's definition of biblical preaching as "imparting a Bible-shaped word in a Bible-like way."[123]

Conclusion

The chapter began by surveying two more recent books geared specifically for planning a preaching calendar. The author then examined influential works in the homiletics field to see how (and if) they treated sermon planning and preparing sermons based on their unique perspective. Finally, broader points of convergence and divergence were highlighted. The chapter attempted to give a general sense of how preaching thought is shaped by virtue of the influence these texts have had on seminarians and parish pastors over the past twenty-five years. This thesis-project will now turn to how the cumulative wisdom of these authors has shaped my own practices and philosophy of sermon planning and preparing sermons.

---

[121] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 449-59. For example, reason 4 states, "Preaching evokes response: The response to preaching is a response to Christ, and is, properly, faith and repentance (453).

[122] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 198.

[123] Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 10.

Chapter 4

Project Design

Introduction

When a preacher plans well in advance what he will preach and develops a sermon-writing process that incorporates exegetical skills and foundational sermon construction practices, he will preach more effective sermons and experience personal peace as a result. To test this hypothesis, I preached in the two traditional services and the contemporary service at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, for four to six consecutive weeks over a three-year period. The traditional services are at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary. The contemporary service starts in the Fellowship Hall fifteen minutes before the 11:00 traditional service. The pastor preaches the sermon in Fellowship Hall at the beginning of the Contemporary service, leaves for the sanctuary, and preaches toward the end of the 11:00 Traditional service in order to be in both services. The first year the sermons were from Philippians and the series was titled, "Joy: Paul's Letter for Pilgrims," preached during August 2013. In 2014, the sermon series was from Proverbs, "Wisdom: The Nuts and Bolts of Life," and sermons were preached the five Sundays in August and the first Sunday in September. The last sermon series, in 2016, was preached the five Sundays in July and was titled, "Free: The Gospel in Galatians."

This project broadly consisted of working with a team of pastors and staff personnel to plan the three series, preaching, and gathering and analyzing feedback data on sermon effectiveness through a focus group,

congregational surveys, and personal interviews. The project's other major consideration was how this method has an effect on the preacher's affect.

I collected varied data to try to analyze sermon effectiveness from a congregational standpoint. I limited what I was trying to gauge to three areas: sermon connection to Scripture, sermon organization/structural integrity, and grasping the Big Idea that parallels life application. I also formed a focus group for pre-sermon feed forward information. This work was not meant to be a full-orbed analysis but more of one that served for basic evaluation. Source material was used for advance planning assessment. To discern my experience as the preacher, with the goal of lessening personal angst in preaching, I "internally observed" myself as a case study and made self-evaluations that served as a journal. I also sought feedback externally from my immediate family as to my disposition. The information collected was captured in a narrative evaluation. This chapter describes what I did and the data I collected in order to evaluate and reflect upon my hypothesis.

Planning a preaching schedule and having a process for sermon preparation formed the backdrop; both were important in evaluating these dual purposes. I will first describe the sermon planning aspect for the project. Next, I will move to the congregation's evaluation of the three sermon series in Philippians, Proverbs, and Galatians. I will then from source material show evidence and advantages of working ahead on the sermons. In conclusion, I will describe in more narrative form my sense of peace as I employed planning and a process for preaching for these three different time periods. Chapter 5 will expand and go into greater depth in reflecting on the thesis- project's results.

Planning a Preaching Calendar: Limitations, Plan

As the associate pastor for family ministries at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, I had some natural confines to planning a preaching calendar. The most obvious is that the senior pastor plans the preaching schedule. Each summer when he takes significant time away for vacation and study leave, the other six associates share the preaching responsibilities. The specific Sundays the senior pastor will not be preaching are not communicated until May. For the thesis-project, I was given consent to provide leadership to the planning and execution of preaching and worship for four to six weeks each summer. Therefore, developing criteria was more challenging, a limitation to the project design because the ideal based on precedent research is planning a year in advance. This bigger-picture planning would include basic skeletal content such as topics or themes and probably Scripture passages. If one were preaching through books of the Bible, having the passages selected and themes from each pericope would be expected.

For the thesis-project, my criterion was a broader, month-out approach for the specific series and a Wednesday-of guideline for individual messages within the series. My intention was to be a minimum of four weeks ahead of time for the overall thrust of the series stated in a summary paragraph. Also, I would have the Scripture passage, a general theme of the passage, and a working title completed a month ahead. As I executed this general timeline, I found I often gravitated to researching specific passages much earlier than was my normal custom, usually four to five weeks ahead of time. For example, I began initial reading and taking notes on Galatians on June 6,

2016, when the sermons began on July 10, 2016. This earlier initial research was similar with the series on Proverbs and Galatians as well.

For specific weeks, my criterion was to have the sermon and all the accompanying parts to the worship service completed by the Wednesday before the sermon was to preached four days later on Sunday. This material included all liturgy elements, including calls to worship, creeds and confessions used, corporate prayers, music, and responses to the Word that synchronized with the passage and theme. It also included practical elements such as the sermon notes section, key verses from the passage that served as headers in First Presbyterian's worship folder, artwork, quotes, and other creative elements provided to the communications department.

An advantage of planning preaching is that opens up the possibility of a steady diet of Old Testament and New Testament content and gives the time margins for preachers to experiment with different genres in the biblical corpus, as well as other possibilities such as varying delivery methods. The precedent research, as well as simple intuition, bore this out. How (and why) did I choose the specific passages for the thesis- project? Part of the rationale for these selections was based on the parameters of the schedule, having only four to six weeks for each series. For Proverbs, four themes were culled from the book as a whole with anchor passages or verse(s). For Philippians and Galatians, each week would be in a new, succeeding chapter, and a logical pericope was chosen. Four weeks in Philippians and six weeks in Galatians was clean in the number of chapters for each week and the time slotted for preaching for the different years.

Also, First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, as a whole has been journeying on a fresh vision and new ministry focus for the past two years;

recovering the gospel's good news has been a consistent emphasis. Paul's gospel attention in Galatians made this letter attractive from a content standpoint based on the church's changing ministry culture.

From an evaluative standpoint, the criterion was reached for each of the three series. I did have the overall series theme more than a month ahead of time (six weeks ahead was the actual time frame) and by Wednesday had all of the liturgical elements and main sermon construction completed. This lead time allowed me to execute such features as getting input from my focus group and provided enough time margins to receive contributions from the other pastors who were also involved in the planning. Three other associate pastors were included to preach one Sunday throughout the three series. They were therefore used as conversation partners for content and agreed to give input to me when it was their specific week to preach.

Planning ahead also resulted in various elements being included in the sermon and service. These included such components as integrating more personal content in my sermons due to working at least a month ahead. An example here was when I brought all of my spiritual journals from home, set up a desk on stage with them stacked on it, and related how I often think that my quiet time and pages written in a journal make me acceptable to God in examining works righteousness. This ahead-of-the-curve reality was a welcome change from the Sunday-morning-snatch-out-of-the-printer and sprint to the car that was my preaching drama for years.

My focus group was instrumental in bringing a tangible reminder that the passage related to them and our church community. When I said, "Some of you moms are running around crazy trying to get your kids to all of their activities and manage a home, and you feel like a hamster on a wheel, and

there's no end in sight." I knew there was a demographic for whom this was the case, as this came straight from a late-thirties focus group mom. Having a focus group to respond to the passage and the specific questions, I wanted to address tethered the sermon to their lives and, I hope, make the sermon better.

Planning at least a month ahead also provided margins to provide secondary matters for the service. Some of those extras for the three sermon series included ordering a resource called "What Is the Gospel?"; purchasing scales to illustrate weighing our good deeds versus our bad deeds to count how we are righteous before God; ordering small-group Bible studies for Sunday school classes and small groups to go through along with the sermon series; emailing to fifteen hundred addresses on Thursday afternoon a one-minute video and two shorter paragraphs' summary of the upcoming sermon for the series on Galatians; communicating with the communications department to design the worship folder with quotes, further study items, and artwork to represent visually the themes; consulting with other pastors on theological questions and administrative details; working with the worship director to produce a trailer video that introduced the series and played each week as the constant, as well as music and songs that were consistent with the overall themes; selecting, interviewing, and filming church members to give their testimony (lasting three to five minutes) via video based on the week's theme during the series on Proverbs; and designing and inserting 4" x 6" index cards in the worship folder that reminded people of God's promises with Scripture references. I also had the time to schedule Scripture readers for the series—meeting with each of them personally and

talking about the importance of Scripture reading.[1] This interaction, like that with my focus group, gave me more insight into them as individuals and to the Scripture passage from their perspective. Technical aspects such as slides with images on them for the sermons were given to our media assistant most weeks, and helping out with stage design based on the overall theme was possible for me.

Planning ahead helped with sermon and communication effectiveness by incorporating some of the elements listed above. It also helped as I worked with others who have a responsibility in planning. In an interview with the contemporary worship director after the series on Galatians, she related how having an initial meeting two months before starting the series was helpful for her as she planned the music for the worship team based on sermonic themes. She commented, "It's easier to plan a music set when you are not shooting in the dark, and it gives a lot more room for creativity."[2]

Conversations with other staff members involved also were helpful to confirm the effectiveness of planning ahead. Assistant Pastor Charlie Buchanan was glad to have the passage and general theme he was going to preach on two months in advance. He commented, "The advance planning allowed me to use relatable examples and illustrations around money. I was having lunch with a church member who was a financial advisor, and we

---

[1] I used Jeffrey Arthurs, *Devote Yourselves to the Public Reading: The Transforming Power of the Well-Spoken Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012) and Tim Challis, "The Public Reading of Scripture," November 30, 2011, accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.challies.com/articles/the-public- reading-of-scripture, for reference and discussion.

[2] Personal interview, Frances Reid, February 2, 2017, Greenville, South Carolina.

were talking about money. He had a great line that I used in the sermon, 'When people get money they do the stupidest things.'"[3] Pastor Buchanan also related the fact that discussing the themes and passages together, regardless of who was preaching, was helpful in sermon preparation. We also had the similar experience that when we planned in advance and were on the lookout for content that fit, the result was having too much material and having to excise content. However, the content that made the cut was more targeted and specific to the passage and people.

I found it necessary to stay at least a month ahead due to all the details associated with the Sunday worship services. Some of these were larger, like working with our graphic artist to think through an image or other visual that would brand the sermon series. Others were smaller, like making sure what microphone the Scripture reader would use when it was his time to read or suggesting a song to the worship director based on the sermon. I saved email (there were also meetings and texts) for communications that dealt more with administrative details. For all the three series, eighteen sermons in all, there were 315 emails. Planning ahead was a necessity to coordinate sufficiently with all personnel involved.

While I found that in planning ahead I had the advantage of thinking things through to add creative elements, in many cases these did not make it past the idea stage. That was probably a good outcome. It seemed if there were ten elements I wanted to incorporate, I maybe did three. Sometimes there was a tension in trying to be effective in the sense of creativity at the

---

[3] Personal interview, Rev. Charlie Buchanan, January 31, 2017, Greenville, South Carolina.

expense of content. Do I go to the downtown district to film "man on the street" cuts for a bumper video that introduces the sermon, or do I look at exegeting the passage more closely? Content needs to be king; the herald needs to be more familiar with the passage and not as much with the peripherals if there is that much of a sharp choice. My tendency was to try to dress up the sermon, even before I finished it, with the secondary matters. Knowing myself, this can be a way to avoid the harder but more substantial work of preparation.

Congregational Evaluation: Questionnaires,
Focus Groups, Interviews

In evaluating the sermon effectiveness, my primary data collection was in the form of congregational surveys for Philippians and Proverbs, and a focus group and in- depth interviews for Galatians. Using varied research methodology enabled me to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses on a firsthand basis for future use. The broad results are described below.

Philippians: Congregational Surveys

In surveys for Philippians, I limited my questions to seven and sought to measure broader themes.[4] Twenty-one surveys on the Philippians 2

---

[4] These survey questions were adapted from the sermon evaluation form of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's "Pastor as Preacher" Doctor of Ministry residency in Charlotte, NC (February, 2011). The questions included:
1. Were the development and overall structure clear?
2. Were the transitions clear and did they review?
3. Did the sermon show how the passage is relevant to your needs and applies to your life? How?
4. Did the illustrations help you understand the passage?
5. What do you think was the sermon's major theme or big idea?
6. What were some strengths and weaknesses of the sermon and/or presentation?
7. Was the sermon based on the passage?

sermon on July 28, 2013, were returned, fifteen by females and six by males. Forty-five were dispersed before the sermon and personally collected afterwards. Six were completed and placed in my church mailbox. My desire with these questionnaires was to evaluate sermon aspects such as structure, application, and the Big Idea. In studying the written comments as a whole, structure and transitions responses were universally positive—no one indicated trouble with sermon's flow and movement. For application, although expressed in written form in different ways, the responses were similar in thematic application. The aggregate comments were what I had hoped to communicate here. Some respondents quoted a key phrase that was part of the sermon; others summarized application at a larger level. In looking at the Big Idea, the responses were similar to the application questions, and all the responses made sense based on the passage and sermon. One respondent left this question blank. A composite picture of the surveys indicated that listeners valued the ability to follow the sermon's structure, use of illustrations that were concrete and familiar with, and articulation of specific ways the passage applied to their lives. Giving directive action items based on the message's thrust was well received by listeners – one comment that summarized the findings indicated that application was such that "I could get my arms around it." The group as a whole affirmed the preacher's speaking slowly and clearly from a delivery standpoint. A final observation on one Philippians sermon evaluation form was an appreciation for using personal story and illustrations, especially when this narrative reinforced the preacher's own need for grace. I got the sense from the comments that "not being the hero" was welcomed and effective in identification with the preacher on a personal, relational level. I

infer that this helped make the sermon more "receivable" and therefore more fruitful.

Proverbs: Congregational Surveys, Descriptive Narrative

The same questions used for the series on Philippians were also used for Proverbs. Thirty-six surveys were returned on August 17, 2014, fifteen by males, twenty-one by females. Fifty were handed out before the sermon. The ages were fairly representative of First Presbyterian Church as a whole but trended toward the age range of fifty to seventy. In the area of sermon structure and transitions, all were positive. Providing a handout with an outline and accompanying verses was helpful to one respondent. There was more variance between the question on sermon application and Big Idea than in the survey on Philippians. One congregation member noted that I tried to cover too much material—this could have added to some confusion and disparity as to application and Big Idea. Other responses gave me pause as to what I thought I was communicating and what was heard and processed. For example, when asking about the sermon's major theme, responses such as "how to improve our attitudes and behaviors" and "avoid conflict" were not what I had hoped to communicate. Another comment, "Relationships always mean conflict," was part of the background I gave early in the sermon in order to move toward restoring broken relationships. If this statement was what she remembered from the sermon, then this sixty-seven-year-old female did not receive much scaffolding on which to stand. Reviewing what was communicated would be helpful to the preacher.

Besides congregational surveys, feedback was also given through unsolicited email response to the series on Proverbs. Two, in particular, were helpful in trying to discern effectiveness. One lay leader commented:

> A sincere thanks for your message yesterday. It spoke right to me, both in terms of all that has been going on at the church, and especially in relationship with my father. There is definitely a time to both absorb the offense and also a time to speak up, but ideally we do so in a way that is couched in humility and compassion, with truth and love underlying it. Praise God that his mercy and grace through Christ is always more than sufficient.[5]

A second helpful perspective was a four-page response from one of our associate pastors after the first sermon in the series on Proverbs. He prefaces his reaction by stating, "I've attended and led a variety of contemporary worship services over the last two decades, so I think I have some frame of reference to what I have to say . . . and this is: this morning's contemporary worship service was simply one of the best I have ever witnessed and certainly the best I have ever experienced in a church our size."[6] He goes on to expand his thoughts in six different areas, two of which have the most bearing on planning and effectiveness. He observes:

1. Exposition and Application of the Word

    Pastor Phil did a wonderful job of warmly introducing the current series and then taking the congregation into the particularities of the text. From making reference to the original meaning of the Hebrew to including illustrations that were connected to the culture of a younger generation, Phil presented a message that was challenging, relevant, and faithful to the Word. Calling up Jonathan Phillipson to read the text was also a wonderful touch. A nice reminder that God's Word can be spoken by all of His people.

2. Overall Synergy of the Service

---

[5] Email titled "Gratitude," September 8, 2014, 12:29 p.m.

[6] Email titled "Contemporary Worship Service This AM," August 3, 2014, 4:16 p.m.

Wow. It was very clear to me that a lot of thought and preparation had gone into the different elements of the service such that they all served to buttress the central message of the series and the text. From the choice of songs, to the graphics, and the poignant video testimony with Jimmy Rogers, EVERYTHING served to focus the congregation on God's gift of wisdom for our lives. In the past, I would meet with Graydon privately for maybe 15 minutes a week or so before the month when I would serve as the assisting pastor . . . and I thought I was doing a good job in pre-planning for the service. What I experienced today was way beyond my meager efforts in the past. BRAVO to everyone who was involved in prepping this worship service and the series that is to follow. OUTSTANDING!

These examples of voluntary feedback from a congregation member reflecting and an associate pastor taking the time to assess, as well as and the positive nature of their thoughts, give me some confidence that what was presented was not toxic or fluff. There seemed to be some degree of effectiveness.

Galatians: Interviews, Feed Forward Group

For the sermon series in Galatians in July 2016 my main methods for collected data were semi-structured interviews and a focus group. An interesting aspect of the interviews was two different reactions to the same sermon. After preaching on Galatians 2, eight days later I asked two people in the congregation if I could interview them about the sermon. After receiving permission to do so, their feedback was different regarding recall and reaction. My first interview was with a sixty-one-year-old female.[7] When I asked her in a semi-structured interview what she thought the sermon's main theme ("big idea") was, she struggled to come up with any significant content. She looked in the margins of her Bible, and there were some previous notes from years ago but nothing from my more recent sermon. I did

---

[7] Personal interview, August 12, 2016, at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville.

review the sermon in summary fashion, and after having this as a prompt, she was able to draw on some themes from the passage and sermon.

Another interview was with a fifty-five-year-old male on the same passage.[8] He was more engaged and offered the following written response in summary of our verbal communication:

> You are an excellent teacher and communicator. Your messages are always well- prepared and well-presented. You never appear to be reading from a script. Your presentation is always concise and succinct. You have an opening that introduces the topic, the meat of the talk that intermixes biblical teaching/topic with proper modern-day correlation and a closing that ties everything together. You are entertaining but never silly. Your examples always are appropriate and connect well with each and every listener.
>
> Your sermon on Galatians 2 was very impressive. Your example of if your wife is sick, instead of feeling sorry for her, your thought always goes to, oh my goodness, how I am going to handle all the extra tasks and about how inconvenient it will be for you. You might as well have said, "Hey Mike, listen up, this one is for you!"
>
> (Cheryl) was out of town for your message, but I made a point to be in attendance to hear your message. When I miss the main chapel message, I purposely listen to your sermon online. Let me know if you need any more information.

What I find intriguing that these interviewees show different responses to the same message preached at the same time. This illustrates why it is a challenge to define effective preaching in an objective way if one seeks listener response.

A second research method used for collected data with the series on Galatians was a focus group that functioned in a pre-sermon advisory role. An initial invitation was sent to twenty-two church members of different genders, ages, family makeup, and seasons of life on June 12, 2016. After explaining in an email the purpose and expectations for the group, each week on the Tuesday before the Sunday the sermon was to be preached, I sent out

---

[8] Personal interview, August 12, 2016, at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville

specific questions from the passage. Each week I got five to seven responses ranging from a couple of sentences to a couple of pages.

Feed forward content given from the group was incorporated into sermons each week and became grist for application that was specific. For example, a mid-thirties male recounted how as a coach in the college basketball world he was often asked to do things for recruits or current players that were unethical or illegal. His desire to "win the approval of others" and advance in his career found him capitulating to the pressure. A late-thirties mother of two recounted how she felt the tension of her career and being a mother and how God spoke to her in resolving the tension with a phrase from the preaching passage. A third instance was when a seventy-three-year-old grandmother detailed how her struggle with trust led her to specific actions. She wrote to me, "Secondly, I say over and over again during the day, in every imaginable situation, and with consistency I TRUST YOU, JESUS, WITH MY LIFE AND THE LIFE OF EVERY MEMBER OF MY FAMILY. And if I am in a situation where I can, I name each one individually! And I try very hard to concentrate, visualize that person, their struggle (or mine) and mean what I say. Once again, the pressure is off. I hand it to him and wait to see."

From responses like these, I was able to weave the human condition as experienced by these three into the sermon where appropriate in the passage.[9] This took shape by simple lead-ins such as "Have you ever been asked explicitly or implicitly to play fast and loose with the rules at work?

---

[9] Care was taken to ensure anonymity or get permission if I was going to cite them specifically in the sermon.

Have you ever felt pressure to fudge figures or facts in order to make the sale and be seen as successful to those around you?" I hope this practice made the sermon accessible and relatable, marks of effectiveness.

The benefit of this representative group was that before preaching I was able to hear from them about questions they had about the passage, challenges it presented, and ways they saw it taking shape in their lives. I was able to respond to their thoughts to clarify, which allowed me to be even more specific and local in application. Because the responses came from those in the First Presbyterian community and were a diverse sample of the congregation, I felt that it was more effective in being relevant to the congregation as a whole. Their input also put them in a more active role in the sermon preparation process, and this would naturally lead to more interest at the actual preaching for the group. The increased interaction with them as we discussed biblical content also provided another avenue for shepherding and relationship-building among members of the group.

In reviewing the surveys, actively listening to the interviews, having dialogue with pastors and others involved in planning, and engaging in conversation with the focus group and church members in general, I have a measure of confidence that, on the whole, the sermons did help listeners do what I was trying to measure. Those aspects were to connect the sermon to the Scripture passage, have an easy-to-follow order, and articulate the sermon's focus (Big Idea) that applied to their lives.

Preacher Evaluation: Ministry Narrative, Journals

As a high school junior, I was asked to preach on a Sunday evening at First Baptist Church of Bledsoe, Tennessee, where our youth group was doing

summer mission work. After accepting, I then wondered how to do this thing called preaching and how to prepare a sermon. It was like riding in the passenger seat of my father's manual- transmission Jeep: I had been in the vehicle hundreds of times but had never considered what to do if I had to drive. The same was true when I had the responsibility of the sermon in a few weeks. Questions flooded my head—how does one begin, what are the steps involved, what do I do to prepare? I found myself with an open Bible beside a yellow legal pad and a pen that had written little grasped by a seventeen-year-old who had much worry.

As I planned ahead and followed a general template for preparing sermons decades later at First Presbyterian Church for this thesis-project, there was definitely less apprehension and naturally more confidence. That assurance was born from theological education and years of church ministry. It was also due to planning that covered what was to be preached on and a method for sermon construction. Twenty-seven years later, I have answered the question of what to do to prepare.

<p style="text-align:center">Ministry Narrative: Descriptive Research, Journals,
Interviews, Personal Case Study</p>

In reviewing and evaluating the overall thesis-project beginning in 2013, there was an overall confidence, freedom, and peace present when engaging in planning and preparing sermons that was not the case in my previous experience as a pastor. I felt more grounded, more centered, more assured that I had put the necessary time and energy into the endeavor, and that elicited a settled response in me personally. I found myself not being distracted and able to give attention and listen to church members before the services on Sunday rather than being holed up in my study frantically trying

to pull the sermon together. It was a newfound joy to mingle thirty minutes before the service and listen; more than once conversation during these times made it into the sermon (with permission!). There was the freedom to be in the moment and to notice in both conversation and nonverbal communication where people were spiritually and emotionally.

I know internally there was more of a calmness and relaxation that was new to me. Although more subjective and not able to plot on a Likert scale, there was a deeper sense of peace. This was not, "Yay, I got the sermon done, I can be on a looser pulley now, jail break!" Rather, it was a deeper sense of well-being and harmony of one who functioned as a workman who does not need to be ashamed—a peace that is the antithesis of shame, a sense that the sermon is a gift that one offers in humility and joy.[10] This was done not under the weight of angst but presented with the feathery freedom of grace.

Besides this internal confidence and centeredness, there were also basic activities that I did that were previously unknown. I went on a five-mile run one Sunday morning. I set the alarm at times for an hour before I needed to be at the church—giving just enough time to dress, eat, and drive to the church. I rewarded myself one Sunday morning by stopping at a Starbucks on the way to First Presbyterian to leisurely read through my sermon a couple more times as well as the Sports section in *USA Today* while nursing an overpriced cup of coffee.

---

[10] This peace was not solely because I had fulfilled my criterion and implemented what I set out to do for a preaching calendar or a sermon preparation template, it was a peace that came about when I had done all the mechanical steps for planning and preparation that simply offered my efforts to the Lord.

As I compare preaching for the thesis-project in 2013-2016 with preaching at Ramah Presbyterian Church as the solo pastor in 2002-2006, I know the difference. While it may be hard to quantify, it is real. A way to describe the difference could be physiological: I knew all too well the feeling of anxiety that came with preaching in my earlier years. My body's engine would get revved up in not good ways, fueled by angst. My desire to be seen as competent, a good preacher, and setting a standard for myself that I could never attain contributed to this feeling. Now, there is a different type of engine throttling that moves in a different direction that adrenaline fuels—an excitement and anticipation to go into the pulpit and point myself and others to Christ and his cross. Adrenaline is replacing anxiety; not as much weight and more worship.

The fact that this was, in general, the case across the three series and three different years gives me confidence that it is a new pattern of engaging in the preaching aspect of pastoral ministry. In other words, it was not for just one specific period but rather over a period of years with the same general, positive result. This also gives confidence that girded by the Holy Spirit, "Hey, I might could do this most weeks and it not be a train wreck."

Confirming with Others: Interviews

While I have used myself as a case study as I moved through the thesis-project phase and experienced shalom in the midst of sermon preparation, was this outlook confirmed with those closest to me? Did they sense a difference in my disposition? Was I relaxed and at ease, or did I seem distracted and irritable?

Conversations with those who would know the most, my family, confirmed that during this time of planning the worship services and preaching, I was on the whole relaxed and calm. My wife related how I did much more planning ahead for the series and therefore had time to mull material over from a reading standpoint and in my head. The fact that I worked with others and received input from them was helpful. She offered that I seemed to be more creative and that "you could invest in other people and not be so focused on the sermon because you made the margins to do that."[11] She related how I did not wake up at 3 a.m. on Sunday morning and not be able to go back to sleep and how finishing the sermon earlier allowed for more time to pray and have personal worship before preaching. This made for a more centered and tranquil attitude.

My wife framed a progression from the earlier preaching years that helped me to see progress in this area. She explained that when I first started preaching regularly, I would come across as being present in body but having angst. This moved from being there in body but not in mind—a distractedness that showed I was not fully present. With the thesis-project sermon work, there was a fuller presence in which I was with her and the children physically as well as all other levels.

Saturdays had traditionally been the Achilles heel for us as a family. My wife recounted how this day improved with the thesis-project sermons. She recounted how my normal pattern would be to leave the house around 6:30 a.m. on Saturday morning and go to a local coffee shop where I spent a few hours reviewing and revising the sermon. I would then come home as the

---

[11] Personal interview, Cary Hargrove, August 28, 2015.

children were getting up and have the rest of the day for family activities.

She recalled how we watched movies on Saturday nights with the children,

went out on dates with just us sometimes, and how in general the day and

weekend were not held hostage by the looming sermon for Sunday. Even

when the weekend had a wedding I was officiating, or something unexpected

came up that required my sustained time and attention (such as water

leaking into our basement during a heavy rain), I did not get overly stressed.

The other aspect that she commented on was from a more technical

aspect with the sermons themselves. Because of advance planning and

having a weekly sermon preparation procedure, the sermons had been

thought about long before they were put on paper and finished several days

before being preached. She noticed that from a communication standpoint I

was not as tied to notes and seemed to more "absorb" personally what I was

preaching on. It came across as more natural, "more alive," that it was a part

of me and I was interacting with the passage rather than regurgitating facts.

This made the preaching more engagingly authentic.[12]

Interviewing and debriefing with my children brought less

conversation around my mood and disposition and more on the sermons

themselves. I inferred that this was a good thing in that they did not perceive

a big difference in me personally on the Sundays that I preached and those

that I did not. In fact, on one occasion when we were eating dinner on

Saturday, and I asked them a question on what they thought about a

particular point, my son responded, "I didn't know you were preaching

---

[12] Personal interview, Cary Hargrove, July 11, 2015.

tomorrow."[13] They talked about how I would ask them what song lyric I might use and if I was pronouncing the name of the band correctly. They related how in general I was "collecting stuff all the time" for sermons. My oldest daughter's comments (she is a freshman in college) succinctly summed up my new reality regarding upcoming sermons: "You've relaxed more over the past several years."[14]

Final Thoughts

When it comes to research methodology, David Currie wryly observes, "The most interesting things are the least measurable, the least interesting things are the most measurable."[15] The more autobiographical portion of the project design was not hard, empirical data. However, for me at least it was interesting and helpful in that the descriptive research illuminated personal tendencies, perspective, work habits, and future hope and confidence as a pastor who preaches regularly. Also, standing over the shoulder and describing how other preachers practice their craft is something that I have always wanted to do. Stephen Tu captures this sentiment when he writes of the voyeurism that other pastors have when it comes to how their colleagues craft sermons: "You show me yours, I'll show you mine. It's a fascination shared by members of the preaching fraternity."[16]

---

[13] Personal interview, Lincoln Hargrove, July 16, 2016.

[14] Personal interview, Allie Hargrove, October 12, 2016.

[15] Faculty advisor meeting, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, December 13, 2013.

[16] Stephen Tu, "Spirit-led Preaching or What's Wrong with American Homiletics?", paper presented to the Evangelical Homiletics Society, 2013, 132.

Even with planning Philippians, Proverbs, and Galatians months in advance, all things did not go exactly according to design. I was reminded of the complexity of working with multiple people and ministry departments and three Sunday morning worship services. With worship directors, communications personnel, other pastors, and focus-group participants in the communication loop, closing the loop from a details standpoint had to be intentional and was more time-consuming than originally conceived. Also, lead time simply ran out for some initiatives. For example, another pastor and I were planning to do a first-person dialogical sermon with Galatians 2 when Paul opposes Peter. I provided a copy of J. Kent Edwards' *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching* as a resource to my colleague seven weeks before, with the idea of our meeting weekly to plan and talk about the passage and the form we would take. With the other, non-preaching ministry items we were involved in, we pushed it off until we both realized it would be too late to try to do what we wanted well. Another eureka was that even though I had defined steps for sermon construction and profiled preachers with theirs, in reality, the steps were not always sequential. I would find myself writing down thoughts for possible conclusions while in still in the thick of passage research—not unlike writing this thesis-project.

A final observation that goes against the general tenor of my hypothesis was my penchant to hold out a little for Saturday evening. For the fifteen sermons preached during the three sermon series, I found that when I had researched thoroughly and planned ahead, I still liked having a small amount unfinished to feel some sermon burden the day before. I discovered that this environment gave me more energy and the sermon seemed to have more life to it when this was the case. This perspective was not as prevalent

from the earlier Philippians preaching focus when I had completed the sermon the week before. There was not the same sense of charge at making smaller tweaks.

I found that I looked forward to the Saturday after-dinner routine of taking those last three hours or so to read over and make stylistic edits and revisions. Sometimes I reworked an illustration or cut it out. Although on some Sunday mornings I exercised or slept later, I also found myself enjoying waking up around 4:30 on Sunday morning to look over the sermon and have some recent familiarity and energy. The welcome of that final push, when I knew I had the majority done and there was no panic but still needed to give it attention, was a surprising discovery.

Conclusion

This project explored the thesis by engaging in planning three four-to-six-week sermon series over a three-year period at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina. This project tested the thesis by carrying out the plan by preaching fifteen sermons and collecting data. It integrates into the practice of ministry by providing for pastors principles for planning their sermons in advance and seeing how other preachers prepare their sermons, with the invitation to assimilate what they find helpful into their own practice. This project illuminated the thesis by confirming the supposition that planning sermons in advance and formulating one's own process to prepare sermons yields more fruitful Sunday mornings. Indeed, the project experiment was to put three different planned, focused preaching series and employing a sermon preparation process into a Pyrex beaker to see if the mixture shattered and made a mess or comfortably bubbled within the

glass confines when sermon effectiveness and preacher affect are considered. No mop needed. No more Saturday night nightmares of walking into the pulpit and trying to speak with a mouth full of rocks.

As I went through the cycle of planning and preparing sermons, I had time to reflect on many considerations. As the project design was meant to marry inquiry to an aspect of ministry such as preaching, there was the natural desire to apply more broadly learning gained from the experience that enhances both preaching and the preacher. Conclusions formed, recommendations offered, areas for more focused study, reflection, further questions, and overall integration that I hope will enhance pastoral ministry will be the thrust of chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Outcomes

Introduction

When Joe Church Member sidles up next to me in the corridors of First
Presbyterian on any given Sunday and queries what my "doctorate" is on, I
resist the temptation to respond, "I am exploring how Solomon employed
literary devices of sexual imagery in Song of Songs chapter 4 and how, within
marriage, those same devices and techniques can be used today for more
fulfilling physical intimacy. My thesis-project is called 'Solomon's Imagery
and Sexual Intimacy: A Field Guide for Today.' Would you and Jane like to be
subjects in the project design?" Instead, my elevator pitch is akin to "It really
isn't rocket science, Joe, but my assumption is that the more a pastor plans
his preaching calendar ahead and the clearer he is in following a
comprehensive process for preparing sermons, the better his sermons will be,
and he will experience more personal calmness." Joe nods his head slightly
and mutters unconvincingly something about wanting to read it when I'm
done.

Bryan Chapell summarizes my hypothesis when he offers:

> Many preachers try to use the slower summer months to plan their upcoming
> church year's preaching program, knowing that the quality of each sermon
> will greatly increase if they know well ahead of time what passages and
> topics they will address [italics added]. Planning ahead enables a preacher to
> establish a pre-sermon file that keeps sermon preparation from degenerating
> into a Friday- afternoon flurry or Saturday-night fever whose results distress
> preacher and congregation alike.[1]

---

[1] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository
Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994, 2005), 64.

Chapell is clear about the necessity of planning a calendar for preaching effectiveness. Andrew Blackwood is more descriptive in his advocacy for planning ahead, linking it to needed nourishment:

> The wise minister preaches according to a program. He makes it himself and is free to change it at will. He thinks of himself as a gardener who is appointed by the King to feed several hundred people throughout the year. The gardener keeps a succession of plants growing in the various beds. He can water them all in the time that a novice would devote to a single corner. What is more pleasing than a garden that is carefully planned as well as nurtured?[2]

Ken Shigematsu summarizes all aspects of the thesis-project's hypothesis and resonates with my thoughts and echoes my experience when he shares the value of planning ahead:

> Working ahead, I am also more present to the people and the projects that are right in front of me. When I was in my "prepare-the-entire-sermon Thursdays" cram session mode, I was always a little distracted by the looming sermon and by Sunday's fast approach.
> Most importantly, I can now be in a prayerful, receptive state as I prepare to preach the sermon. When we are under a great deal of pressure, we have less bandwidth to pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is doing in our souls, in our everyday lives, and in the lives of other people—all of which are crucial to good preaching.[3]
> A longer preparation window helps reduce our anxiety, foster our creativity, and bring us into a prayerful attentiveness to the Holy Spirit. Not only will we experience more fruit, but we will also more fully embody the gospel of love, joy, and peace that we are proclaiming. As pastors, of course, what we say is vitally important. But what we preach through our daily lives is ultimately more vivid, impactful, and enduring.[4]

This final chapter will examine the thesis-project's results, reflect on the nature of the research, and highlight areas of further inquiry while

---

[2] Andrew Blackwood, *Planning a Year's Pulpit Work* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1942), 15.

[3] What I call for the purposes of the study effective preaching.

[4] Ken Shigematsu, "Taking the Pressure Out of Sermon Prep," Preaching Today, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2015/october/taking-pressure-out-of-sermon-prep.html.

probing lingering questions. It will conclude with interpretations and implications for future ministry and offer recommendations based on the project.

Results

Peace Experienced, Effectiveness Realized

In examining "From Study to Sanctuary: Planning a Calendar and Developing a Process for Effective Preaching," I found what seems like a self-evident premise was reinforced by others who examined sermon planning. Scott Gibson reports, "Without exception, all of the books and articles I've read as I researched the subject have emphasized the importance of being prepared—that planning sermons ahead of time is good for the preacher and the congregation."[5]

This thesis-project gave me the impetus and structure to spend concentrated time on what I have wanted to do anyway—to confirm my assumption that the vast majority of communicators I esteem plan in advance what they will preach. It gave me the opportunity to pull back the curtain and from a backstage view see how some go about crafting their sermons. This research was helpful personally in taking aspects of different practitioners' methods and cobbling together my routine based on trial and error.

I found planning in advance and having a procedure for sermon construction was vital to me for my sense of well-being. It also produced

---

[5] Scott M. Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 121.

better preaching. Knowing where I was going in preaching, having my destinations predetermined and inviting fellow travelers to help in the navigation ensured a smoother trip. When I had to officiate weddings and a good chunk of Friday evening and Saturday afternoon was tied up, I was not a basket case because the sermon was mostly finished. I was not speeding through yellow lights in downtown Greenville on Sunday mornings in a huff because I had not finished the sermon until it was spit out of the printer as I sprinted to the shower. I was noticeably calmer, less stressed, and more present with my family. I had time margins on Sunday morning before the sermon to do things I had previously never experienced—rewarding myself with Starbucks coffee, exercising, sleeping late, and visiting with congregation members before the service.

This thesis-project helped me with structure and organization. My mind is not methodical. It does not think in tightly ordered steps and sequences. I need processes in place to compensate. I need tracks to slide on, a template to trace, a model to modify, a stencil to steal. I gravitate to sturdy guardrails that keep me from pitching my car down a steep embankment. I also like having confidence that what am I doing in preparing echoes the collective wisdom of the church because of the research depth.

Having familiar roads to take me to those destinations gave me more peace and a sense of confidence in preaching. Homing in on a process for preparing sermons that was tweaked over the years and developing my own template after surveying and incorporating how others went about their craft was helpful in giving me those tracks to run on. It cleared away the inefficient underbrush. It was comprehensively "good for the preacher," to borrow Gibson's phrase.

Was it "good for the congregation" as Gibson found as well? To assess benefit to the congregation proved to be more challenging. When one is trying to measure concepts in people such as life transformation, growth in grace, and spiritual maturity. the inherent difficulty is apparent. No research methodology can fully cover these aspects definitively using empirical tools or any metrics. However, I can answer a more intuitive yes to the congregation's good. I was able to anticipate more of their questions, get their input before preaching, and therefore incorporate their worldviews as they intersect with the gospel. I got feedback that was positive on organization, clarity, and application. I was able to integrate their stories into the sermon as they related to the passage, a "good for the congregation."

Less precise metrics helped me infer a measure of effectiveness. I noticed a card I had put in each worship folder that reinforced that particular sermon's theme taped to an administrative assistant's computer monitor was still there two years later. This makes me think that particular sermon had some traction in her life. Noticing a dog-eared sermon notes half sheet tucked in the back of a colleague's Bible three years later gives me some confidence that the sermon made some connection (or that her Bible is not cleaned out regularly!).

General Results

There were other unforeseen positive outcomes from this undertaking. Being in dialogue with a focus group about the upcoming sermon provided a natural time for more interaction and allowed me to get to know the group members better and build relationships. From elementary school students to single twenty-somethings, to soccer moms to empty nesters to retirees, the

conversation around the sermons also led to other conversations that informed me for preaching and allowed me to be their pastor in deeper ways. It also helped the group to see what goes into sermon construction and informed them on ways to engage Scripture and apply it to their lives. The intangibles such as praying for the preacher will, I hope, have carry-over effect when they are not a part of a focus group. This can only help the preaching on a week-by-week basis.

When working ahead, the pleasant eureka was that I had to go through the process of cutting out content because I had too much. While this was initially hard, it is freeing to have too much helpful information and needing to select the best rather than having to labor through material from the opposite end. I have found that when I have not prepared well in advance, the latter is the norm and does not serve the congregation in the best way.

Another reality I found when working ahead and conceiving possibilities was the items and ideas that did not make the cut. As I worked ahead, a swath of creative possibilities stayed in the idea stage. It seemed like no matter how far in advance I thought of an item that might be helpful for the sermon or service, many were not implemented because of time constraints. I had to remind myself that while preaching is the main role, it is not the only role. Examples of ideas not executed either because of time or because they were not ultimately good ideas included doing a dialogical sermon with another staff pastor of Paul's and Peter's confrontation in Galatians 2; interviewing my high school coach live to illustrate being motivated out of delight rather than duty; having a talk-back time after one

of the services to discuss the passage's theme; and using barbed wire around the staging area to represent visually the antithesis of freedom.

My motivation in "From Study to Sanctuary" is that pastors give their best efforts to preaching. Having best practices as a guide would help. I have tried to give guidance on how to do this by offering how others practice the preaching craft. To be sure, preaching is hard work. To think one can give due diligence to the task in a couple of days will often result in vapid preaching, the opposite of effective.

A final broad result of the thesis-project is my affirmation that preaching is a local event that is unique to one's specific ministry context. I sought to reinforce this conviction in the three preaching series.[6] In *The Drama of Doctrine*, Kevin Vanhoozer buttresses this assertion when he imagines doctrine as a script, the pastor as a director, and the local church as the company of performers who improvise to perform the script. Because the pastor directs people to perform faithfully through preaching, the sermon must be local. He explains:

> The sermon, not some leadership philosophy or management scheme, remains the prime means of pastoral direction and hence the pastor's paramount responsibility. The good sermon contains both script analysis and situation analysis. It is in the sermon that the pastor weaves together the drama truth and local knowledge . . . The sermon envisions ways for the local congregation to become a parable of the kingdom of God. It is the pastor's/director's vocation to help congregations hear and do God's word in and for the present.[7]

---

[6] Using examples gained from the focus groups and producing video testimonies of church members that were played in some cases before the sermon and in others during the sermon are examples of how I sought to make the sermons specific to the First Presbyterian Church community.

[7] Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 456.

Because of this reality, planning ahead to safeguard against generic sermonizing will improve preaching. If the proclamation is not local and therefore does not align with one's geography, it will not be edifying to those people. It will be ineffective.

Darryl Dash sums this up well when he states, "The best (most effective) preaching is local. It doesn't take place in conferences, but in the local church, pastor to people."[8] John Ortberg speaks of this real-life specificity when he offers, "When I begin the actual writing process, I think about particular people who might be in the audience: someone who just went through a break-up, someone who just got accepted at college, someone who just lost a job, someone who struggles with a sexual addiction and is scared to death someone else is going to find out. I picture them in my mind. Everybody has a need. Never write for a faceless crowd."[9] John Piper counsels, "As pastor of a local church, the job is to read the Scriptures and understand the Scriptures specifically in relation to the needs of his flock. He is not supposed to be a generic preacher. He is supposed to guard this flock and feed this flock because he knows and loves this flock."[10]

Similarly, Garrett Kell connects this local connection with sermon effectiveness when he offers:

[8] Darryl Dash, *Ordinary Preacher: How to Preach Well, Even If You're Average* (Toronto: Gospel for Life, 2016), 51.

[9] John Ortberg, "Birthing a Sermon," Christianity Today Pastors, accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/august-online-only/070718a.html.

[10] John Piper, "My Pastor Uses Pre-Made Sermons—Should I Be Concerned?", accessed April 7, 2017, http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/my-pastor-uses-pre-made- sermons-should-i-be-concerned.

Pastors don't give talks or speeches. We preach sermons. Sermons are one of God's means to move souls to love him and others more faithfully. This is why I keep a copy of our church's membership directory open before me while I prepare, it is, in my mind, the second-most important book for every Christian. As I compose particular points of application, I pause, flip through the pages of our directory, and pray. I ask God, "What does she or he need to hear? How would your word help their sorrows or sin struggles?" I then craft words aimed at specific sheep . . . The better a pastor knows the people under his care the more precise his applications can be. I believe having both God's Book and my membership book open before me aids me in preaching more helpful sermons.[11]

One church's website highlights the particular nature and immediacy of proclamation in its disclaimer:

> The messages shared on Sunday mornings are specific to this church community. They reflect our stories in a particular moment in the life of our church. The value and significance of these talks can change as they are dispersed to a wider community; therefore we provide temporary access for those who missed a particular Sunday.[12]

Boring into the local community to show how their stories intersect with the gospel takes time to cull those stories and fashion them into God's kingdom story. Planning ahead to know what to ask and subsequently catching those narratives are usually not done (well at least) on Saturday afternoon.

---

[11] See Ivan Mesa, "10 Books That Belong on Every Pastor's Bookshelf," The Gospel Coalition, April 11, 2017, accessed April 24, 2017, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/10-books-that-belong-on-every-pastors-bookshelf.

[12] Mesa, "10 Books That Belong on Every Pastor's Bookshelf," 51.

Personal Synthesis

As I survey my 18' x 12' church office, the majority is occupied by information related to the Doctor of Ministry final project: twelve four-inch white binders filled with thousands of three-hole-punched pages of articles on sermon planning and preparing; sermon evaluation forms from more than forty seminaries, divinity schools, and denominational governing boards; and dozens of preaching and worship books that Amazon Prime delivered in two days and now for three years have provided grist for absorbing, reflecting, and framing the project's focus. My OmniFocus project management software on my MacBook Air shows 1096 individual notes spread over thirty-two parent projects of ideas and thoughts related to planning and preparing. With this as a backdrop, what was the result when I prepared sermons in that same office? How did I synthesize the material for my ministry purposes? Appendix F describes what I, after surveying the precedent research and preaching three series at First Presbyterian, think is the best way forward for a sermon groundwork method.

Reflections

There was much to reflect on when considering the project's scope. This section highlights some of the aspects related to planning and preparing. In reflecting on these elements, they will naturally inform my thoughts concerning the task in the years to come.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Even though the precedent research showed that there are consistent methods and steps involved, one cannot be dogmatic on planning ahead for

preaching and the sermon preparation process—it is not a one size fits all. One size does not fare well with either clothes or proclamation. Several factors affect a given pastor's planning and preparation methods. Chapell states, "The steps preachers take in preparing messages vary according to the personality of the preacher, the time available, the nature of the occasion, the type of sermon, the prior knowledge the preacher has of the text, and many other factors."[13] There cannot be a simplistic correlation between planning ahead and having a preparation process and effectiveness; "plan ahead and have a process" does not equal sermonic success. Indeed, the legendary Gardner C. Taylor did not plan far ahead. He admits:

> I operate on narrow margins of reserve. I rarely know what I'm going to preach about on the Monday or Tuesday before a Sunday preaching date, most Tuesdays I have no conscious sense of what I'm going to preach about Sunday morning. By Tuesday night—and this is a mystery to me—some idea will come. I may spark it by looking back through some of the things I've read, or by what Alexander Maclaren called "sitting silent before God." I don't necessarily advise this for preachers—but it works for me.[14]

Having more of a measured pace where he works three weeks on a specific sermon resonates with Andy Stanley. Starting on Friday morning and gunning for the finish is Piper's *modus operandi*. To summarize, "Different strokes for different folks" and Polonius's injunction, "To thine own self be true." The same is true for preaching. As David Currie stated, "Preach as you can, not as you can't."[15] Similarly, plan and prepare as one can.

---

[13] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 344.

[14] Terry Muck and Paul Robbins, "The Sweet Torture of Sunday Morning: An Interview with Gardner C. Taylor," Christianity Today Pastors, accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1981/summer/81l3016.html.

[15] David Currie, The Pastor as Preacher residency class notes, February 2, 2011, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Follow the Steps, Stir in a Bowl, Presto?

While reviewing others' sermon planning and preparation, one can get

the idea that sermon crafting is merely following prescribed steps of leading

practitioners, a simple recipe that results in a gourmet meal. Haddon

Robinson reminds that this is not reality and advocates for preparation's

more personal, tailored nature that is buttressed but not dictated by others:

> When a discussion on how to prepare an expository sermon resembles
> instructions on how to build a doghouse, something has gone wrong . . . but
> knowing how others work in the Bible can be welcome assistance. To this
> counsel, we must each bring our own mind, spirit, and experience . . . we
> must develop our own way of working. But an awareness of how others
> approach the task produces confidence and contributes to a more efficient use
> of time and energy.[16]

Preaching Is Not the Be-All, End-All

While preaching is a high calling, it alone does not make the whole of

the pastoral life.[17] The necessity during the project was to focus heavily on

preaching content and the Sunday worship gathering. Isolating this from the

---

[16] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980, 2001), 53.

[17] Just as the sermon is not the only element that is important in corporate worship, so preaching is not the sole arrow in sanctification's quiver for the pastor or congregation. It is not intended that this thesis- project put undue pressure on a preacher to view preaching as the fulcrum on which his people's souls move forward or backward. When combined with the other tasks of pastoral ministry, preaching provides the foundation for an incarnational ministry where lives lived together in community point to a powerful "lived-out" gospel. Paul strikes this both/and in 1 Thess 2:8 when he affirms, "Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." Put simply, a sermon is not the only avenue to bring spiritual transformation. In many cases, the pastor-shepherd will have years and sometimes decades to labor with his people for gospel change to take place. This happens not necessarily because of a sermon but in tandem with the ministry of proclamation. The consistency of a life well-lived among the people is a powerful witness for life change.

other aspects of pastoral ministry is neither tenable nor wise. Spending an inordinate amount of time on the hour or so that the church meets for corporate worship truncates a full-orbed ministry that finds redemptive moments throughout the week. If the preacher sees the sermon as the equivalent of an annual State of the Union address, the attention required will preempt him from shepherding his flock that naturally provides fodder for local sermon content. Paul does charge Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2), yet he also instructs him several verses later to "discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). There is a balance. Is one a preacher or a pastor? Both; the two are not in opposition to each other.

Contextualization Key

Furthermore, one must contextualize to his ministry. In the largest churches, the preacher is much more specialized. Andy Stanley rarely officiates weddings. A call to NorthPoint Church to try to interview Pastor Stanley will result in a kind rebuttal because of his predetermined areas where he will spend his time. Perry Noble, formerly pastor of Greenville's NewSpring Church, has personal assistants and multiple staff to coordinate the Sunday service. (I interviewed Stephen Cope, worship producer for NewSpring Greenville, on the process for worship services and Noble's sermon process.) The point here is not to make a value judgment on ministry philosophy and style but rather to recognize that for the vast majority of churches and pastors trying to replicate the standard these large churches have set is impossible. Every church does not have its own communications department with five employees, as does First Presbyterian.

"Know Thyself"

My natural inclinations are to gather and live in the world of ideas.[18] I wear out my voice memo application on my iPhone with "brain dumps." This application is littered with to-dos, ideas, and errands. They seem to explode across my brain all the time and need to be corralled and then transferred into another software application.[19] That gives me assurance that they will not be lost or forgotten. Therefore, this research was practically beneficial in my calling as a pastor to me in a "physician, heal thyself" way. It has allowed me to conceptualize a process that in the past has caused much angst, much weeping and gnashing of teeth. It invites a different way to sermon crafting that is liberating and joy-infused. Help and hope for would-be panicked preachers are the resounding notes.

Indeed, having a preaching calendar and a process is not to suggest that the preaching enterprise is a highly orchestrated, linear, sequential, mechanical, static task. Rather, my experience is that message building is not a task but a process, not a start/finish endeavor but a journey to travel. Preaching has proved to be fluid, looping, messy, and unpredictable; it does not always stay within the lines or run smoothly on preplanned tracks. To be sure, there is a certain amount of relief that there is a guide that I can go to that spells out everything and gives direction and specific steps, like a recipe

---

[18] My Top 5 Signature Themes from Donald Clifton's *Strength Finder's* work include Input and Intellection. The Input theme has a wide bandwidth for accumulating information and one who is described as constantly on the lookout for new sources of inspiration. Intellection points to a deep internal reflection of thoughts and ideas that lead to decision making (Rath, *StrengthsFinder* 2.0, New York: 2007), 189.

[19] OmniFocus is my app of choice. It is my digital storage shed where I organize and can retrieve data as needed.

card. However, this guide is not a straightjacket but a compass. It provides a smoother path that makes the ground easier to travel with well-worn grooves and clears away the underbrush that can slow travelers. However, it is not meant to get pastors in a rut that robs the sermon-crafting process of its fluidity and dynamic quality where everything always fits nicely together, and there is no variation week after week. This can lead to staleness, boredom (for both preacher and congregation), and predictability. Like Kirk Byron Jones's *The Jazz of Preaching* suggests, there can and often should be improvisation.[20]

Effectiveness and Unction

As noted earlier, there is also not the implied message with "From Study to Sanctuary" that if the pastor follows the guide and does all or most of the steps, then the sermon will be effective or successful—however one operationally defines the term. A sermon can be technically flawless with clarity and Big Idea all over it, the entire service can sync with the Scripture and sermon to create a sense of flow and unity, and yet no unction. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones defines unction as "God giving power, and enabling, through the Spirit, the preacher in order that he may do this work in a manner that lifts it up beyond the efforts and endeavors of man to a position in which the preacher is being used by the Spirit and becomes the channel through whom

---

[20] Kirk Byron Jones, *The Jazz of Preaching: How to Preach with Great Freedom and Joy* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2004). Jones advocates that one does not write a sermon or prepare one, but, in the words of Yale's Thomas Troeger, "imagines a sermon." He reinforces advance planning to avoid hasty sermon construction in stating, "I believe that many contemporary sermons are sabotaged from the start by fast food imagining and instant dreaming. We usually do not allow nearly enough time for sermon seeding and spreading, for idea forming and framing, for listening, listening, thinking, and listening" (Jones, 4).

the Spirit works."[21] Unction is the Holy Spirit's anointing where God's unmistakable presence attends and empowers the preaching of his truth.[22]

There were a couple of times during the three sermon series that I felt like "something was happening" in the room. Perhaps it was what Celtic spirituality refers to as "thin places" when God's presence is sensed in extraordinary ways. I am not sure the difference between what is meant by unction and thin places in regards to preaching in a worship gathering (or what some call *kairos* moments[23]), but there was a perception that time slowed down, there was a "thickness" in the sanctuary, and people were really paying attention—not to me or because of me with some wonderful oratorical flourish, but rather the Spirit speaking in deeper ways without words.

<div align="center">

Stopping the Spigot: Safeguards
for the Information Collector

</div>

A personal discovery/reminder to me during the thesis-project was that at some point, the researcher has to stop researching. With one of my signature themes from *Now, Discover Your Strengths*[24] being Input,[25] the

---

[21] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), 305.

[22] Ben Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin* (Eugene, OR: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), 31.

[23] See Mike Breen's *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discpling People Like Jesus Did* (Pawley's Island, SC: 3D Ministries, 2011).

[24] Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (New York: The Free Press, 2001).

sheer volume of information, or the possibility of, can be a time hole and foster unrealistic thinking.[26] I set myself up with the pressure of thinking I have to be comprehensive in research scope because of all the information out there. This is good up to a point. However, I feel like I have to have reams of papers and manila folders stacked up, flowing out of a leather satchel that I present at the defense table before preaching, as if I am a lawyer in a John Grisham novel. To expect this every seven days where content is researched to the nth degree is unrealistic. I know I tend to fall into this trap, and therefore safeguards need to be put in place so as not to get bogged down in the sea of material.

David Currie reminded Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary first-year Doctor of Ministry students that there are two types of thesis-projects: perfect ones and completed ones. (He advised to aim for the second.) The same is true for the sermon. It will never be perfect, but it does need to have an end point. A sermon has borders, and as a picture has a frame around it, it has a focus area. The art gallery has many pieces of art on the wall; the preacher has many Sundays to preach. Taking the long view of consistent preaching week in and week out can help the preacher remember that fifty-five-minute sermons that try to cover all of redemptive history may not be necessary or helpful.

---

[25] Buckingham and Clifton describe this strength as "People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information" (18).

[26] The sermon in practical terms had a hard time getting off the ground because I was stuck in the research and gathering phases.

Further Reflections

In doing some internal reflecting, I realized years later that part of my angst in preaching was wanting others to think well of me. I wanted to be seen as gifted and an "up and comer" in the evangelical stratosphere, profiled by *Christianity Today* because of my church that grew from four in my living room to four thousand in a renovated mall in four months. My daily existence would be to expand my personal platform and sphere of influence in order to be "a good steward of my gifts." I would do this by setting up ways to respond to the scads of the populace waiting for my take on the latest theological or cultural issue via my personal website, blog, or ubiquitous social media outlets.

Evangelical publishers would harass my public relations agent on book contracts that I would oblige every eighteen months with Max Lucado-like regularity and sales.

While it is painful to acknowledge the spiritual immaturity and lack of identification of who I was in Christ with such an orientation (and amusing at the sheer foolishness of desiring such a pastoral destination), this mindset nonetheless found a resting place in my soul. There was also a perfectionism that found expression in listening to numerous podcasts and sermons of the best communicators (and knowing that congregation members also have access to the best preachers on the planet with technology) and thinking I needed or wanted to be like them. Putting pressure on myself to be so brought angst.

Questions to Address and Further Study

The focus on planning and preparing sermons was analogous to walking through a theme park: The main pathway through the park was directed with these two foci.

However, other cul-de-sacs off the chief thoroughfare vied for attention because of the overlap with planning and preparing. In examining the precedent research and engaging in the project, I was able to think more deeply about aspects that are related to the pastor's primary tasks. This section delineates some of those questions and other avenues related to preaching that could not be addressed more fully.

Questions Related to Effectiveness

How is a sermon different from a speech under the microscope of evaluation? The objectivity of rhetorical analysis versus the dynamic nature of when and how a sermon is heard—does this put the sermon in a different category? How should technology be used in preaching and worship in 2017— have we matured past the movie-clip-showing, PowerPoint-clicking presenter? What are some basic principles of listener receptivity that steer clear of a Buttrick-laden phenomenology? Cannot the charge against a Christocentric hermeneutic that makes sermons predictable and therefore boring be leveled against any approach?

What is the staying power of sermons? Is the goal to remember information about them? Is the often-asked question "What was the sermon about?" the best question to ask? Could a collaborative preaching model be a way forward for different perspectives and voices preaching to a congregation

over a period of time?[27] What does the evangelical world do with the New Homiletic critique on an overemphasis on a rationalistic approach that reduces God to a "box of ideas"?

At a more basic level, probing the question "What makes a sermon good?" was an unexpected examination that was layered and nuanced—the difference between an oral speaking event in the context of the community's gathered worship and a sermon as subjected to the normal markers of standard speech analysis. Then how does one measure a sermon's effectiveness in such delivery systems as podcasts? How do the Holy Spirit and what the individual brings himself to hearing a sermon (whether in a sanctuary or on a sofa) affect effectiveness?

<div style="text-align:center">How to Measure Effectiveness?</div>

It would be interesting to sit down weeks or months later and talk with the focus group about the sermon series regarding effectiveness and trying to quantify it. Some questions that surface include: Is the ability to parrot back the content of what was preached a measure of effectiveness? Was an application incorporated into one's life? How do you know when someone is "growing spiritually"—what are the markers? Can one discern a person's theological arc and worldview as a foundation in which to live life and make decisions that honor Christ and further the kingdom? Do sermons lay the foundation with which to navigate life? Do people go back to review sermon notes to consult what was preached in order to be informed or make

---

[27] The preacher's need to live the truths of the sermon himself, the listener's becoming accustomed to one person and therefore giving varied orality, and taking into account not locating authority in one "expert" to where preaching is more a shared task among several seems positive.

decisions? Is the act of taking notes by listeners and transmitting information a main function of preaching?

Further Study Areas

Researching how others prepare sermons allowed me to see some alternate ways that some use in the preparation process. This education has been intriguing and elicits a personal desire for further study. At times, some went against traditional methods—for example, mind mapping for sermons that diverges from outlining.[28] Seeing how techniques such as storyboarding, word webs, and five-sensing can help generate ideas and spark creativity during the sermon preparation phase could be helpful.[29] These areas have a direct influence on how one crafts sermons and implicitly their quality. Appendix F examined what makes a sermon effective, and yet further study is necessary.

Baylor University is again conducting a new Effective Preacher's Survey as the last twenty years have brought significant change in the church and have influenced preaching practice. It will be interesting to examine when this new survey is completed what elements are similar and different compared to what was considered effective in 1996 and the reason for any shifts.

---

[28] See Reece B. Sherman, "How to Prepare and Preach a Sermon Using a Mind Map," accessed April 24, 2017, http://reecesherman.weebly.com.

[29] A good overview of these practices is Howard Hendricks, *Color Outside the Lines: A Revolutionary Approach to Creative Leadership* (Nashville, TN, 2007).

How Much Time to Spend on Sermon Preparation?

Much time was spent examining different preachers' methods for planning their preaching program and how they constructed their message. There was more variation in sermon preparation due to the nature of the sermon—planning a calendar is a straightforward endeavor as far as end goal than crafting a sermon. Planning can be seen as more a roadmap to a destination, a knowing where you are going, whereas sermon crafting is more like the putting together the car that will drive to the destination. The car, depending on the shape of the text, can have different features for different purposes.

Because of the wider berth of sermon preparation and the individual pastor's work habits, personality, and specific ministry context, development time was more wide-ranging in examining the literature. For example, bivocational pastors spend the least time in sermon preparation at five hours or less per week, whereas pastors of larger churches spent more time in sermon preparation on average.[30]

Too High a View of Preaching?

Another question—one that may seem heretical—is whether we have elevated the "primacy of preaching" in our evangelical circles (and my Reformed tribe) to such a level that the sermon itself takes on an almost mystical aura. In my current context, the sermon is placed at the end of the service for the expressed reason "to end on a high note." The thought here is

---

[30] Thom Rainer, "How Much Time Do Pastors Spend Preparing a Sermon?", Growing Healthy Churches Together, June 22, 2013, accessed April 24, 2017, http://thomrainer.com/2013/06/how-much- time-do-pastors-spend-preparing-a-sermon/.

that the sermon is the most important part of the service, and therefore one places it at the end to have everything build up to the preaching moment. This rationale tends to follow in the revivalist tradition rather than a Reformed liturgy that has space for a response to the preached word in the liturgy's rhythm.[31]

Another question that goes a bit deeper is how evangelicals understand liturgy as carrying the story of the gospel and how other elements of our worship can articulate grace and gospel good news that is soul nourishing and life transformative. Michael Quicke calls this thinking "small picture worship" and evaluates, "Hubris plagues the act of preaching; rightly convinced of preaching's importance, preachers can wrongly become self-important. Investing all their time in sermon-making, and proclaiming its importance for proclaiming the gospel (Roms.10:9), they can sideline worship as a secondary matter."[32]

Solitary or Communal Event?

Related to the above, another facet of preaching that surfaced during the research was how much of preaching is a solitary event versus a communal experience.[33] In other words, does the preacher fashion himself an isolated Moses going up to Mount Sinai to receive from Yahweh by himself

---

[31] D. A. Carson, ed., *Worship by the Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

[32] Michael Quicke, *Preaching as Worship: An Integrative Approach to Formation in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 12.

[33] Norma deWaal Malefyt and Howard Vanderwell offer a helpful primer on a collaborative, shared perspective on preaching and worship services in *Designing Worship Together: Models and Strategies for Worship Planning* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005).

and then bringing down the results? There should be consistent interaction between pastor and people that shapes how he writes with those particular people in mind, but does the pastor see himself as the lone purveyor of exegetical insight from a particular passage?[34] If so, then constituting feed forward groups or involving congregation members in the sermon construction process is not as necessary. An oversimplified version of this question is, Is the preacher's orientation in the sermon writing process to hole up in his study to think and to write, or is he to gather folks at Starbucks to talk and discuss? Dave McClellan invites further reflection here that sways how one prepares sermons when he writes:

Sermons have long been the exclusive province of the trained professional: their formulation and documentation the very pedigree of a professional clergy class. But while bolstering authority and expertise, the private, finished sermon actually promotes individualism over community. How can we include others in the generation and delivery of a sermon without compromising legitimate Scriptural authority? How participatory does a sermon need to be?[35]

---

[34] This is not to infer that due to specialized training the pastor should not use his foundational knowledge to inform. I would not want to have an EKG done, and then have my cardiologist hand me the recording strip and ask me what I thought and how to proceed.

[35] Dave McClellan, "The Unfinished Sermon: Involving the Body in Preparation and Delivery," *Papers Presented to the Evangelical Homiletics Society Annual Conference*, 2009, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, TX, 1-7.

Big Idea Worship?

The thought kept coming to mind while researching that if it is advantageous to have one central theme for the sermon within the context of corporate worship, why could this not be true of the worship gathering itself? Is there something that is disparate about preaching that puts it in its own category that would have its unique conventions where liturgy's other parts are excluded? If it is good for the sermon, why can't it be good for the service?

Planning a sermon calendar in advance will naturally lead to more orchestrated worship planning because the time margins will be there to plan with worship directors, musicians, and others who have creative ideas about worship that could unify the entire service around a central theme. The question for further study is whether all of the elements of worship need to flow around one main thrust? If so, then there is all the more impetus for planning. David Currie has considered these questions in his book, *The Big Idea of Biblical Worship*.[36] Jeff Arthurs cannot be compelled theologically for single-themed worship services but can pragmatically, echoing Charles Spurgeon: "It's better to hit one nail twelve times than twelve nails one time."[37] Examining and articulating further a theology of liturgy[38] is needed to answer some of these questions.

---

[36] David Currie, *The Big Idea of Biblical Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017).

[37] Jeffrey D. Arthurs, personal interview, August 13, 2015.

[38] Is participatory leadership in worship a function of a particular pastor's preference or is there solid biblical/theological warrant for liturgy as "the work of the people"? If there is, planning and having a marker in the preparation process to allow for this is essential.

Conclusion: Interpretations, Implications,
Recommendations

With a nod to the Big Idea and an apology to those who abhor alliteration, the theme of this thesis-project is summarized in the statement

A Plan + A Process = Productive Proclamation and A Peaceful Pastor. I understand the whole of the thesis-project broadly in what might seem like self-evident counsel for preaching: plan a calendar, engage a process. This puts the herald in the best position for effectiveness in the pulpit. It is foundational to good preaching. It situates proclamation in the local context and learns from others the craft. It allows for evaluation on several different levels: how focus forward groups work best before the sermon is preached, how surveys can give helpful feedback after the sermon, and how planning and having a template or sermon routine that takes into account the pastor's individuality and make-up reduces stress and fosters peace.

Planning and honing in on a sermon construction process relates to my own ministry concerns because of my inconsistency in implementing this general approach. As a newer pastor, my earlier attempts were what Chapell described as Friday-afternoon flurries and Saturday-night fevers. In trying to untangle how to plan and to prepare sermons in the midst of other ministry responsibilities, there was not a rhythm or long- term sustainable path. This reality was in part a reason why I transitioned into an associate pastor role that did not have as its primary focus preaching. "From Study to Sanctuary" has had the practical benefit of providing a personal desire to re-enter a pastoral ministry role where regular preaching is expected. It has given me the confidence that doing so will not be a mortal wound in ministry or life.

Implications

I expected my results to yield two things. One is a resource reference that pastors can use as they plan their preaching and prepare their sermons. This resource will serve as tracks to run on that take the guesswork out of sermon planning and preparation and move them forward by giving focus and sequencing.

The other result is less measurable but just as essential. First, I want to engender confidence that God honors faithful and intentional sermon planning and preparation in building his kingdom. My expectation is that when I (and others) put into practice the thrust of "From Study to Sanctuary," sermons will be better communicated. The result is not for people to be dazzled at a preacher's oratorical skill and leave the greeting line with a *"What a great preacher!"* but rather to be awed by the glory of God and leave with *"What a great God!"*

Second, I want to give hope and encouragement for pastors to find their voice to the people to whom they have been called in their specific ministry setting. With the ease of technology, it is easy for pastors to hear the world's best communicators and compare themselves unfavorably. I want to remind pastors that preaching is not an isolated event devoid of the life togetherness that a pastor enjoys with his flock. To summarize, what the podcast pastor cannot provide for your people is a presence. You have baptized your people's babies and buried their parents. You have a history with them shared over the Communion table and the kitchen table. While a publisher may call Andy Stanley to do a book, the now young adult woman with whom you painted a house on a mission trip in junior high school calls you to do her wedding. Pastor, you occupy that place of sacred trust, that

incarnational ministry of presence that when combined with the power of God's Word is life transforming.

Third, I want to encourage a sustainable rhythm for the hard work of preaching. The vision I want to paint for myself is that I will watch college football on fall Saturday afternoons without consternation. After the game, I will take a couple of hours to read over the completed sermon, revise a little more, and fine tune. I will experience some pain in having to do minor surgery on content to make it leaner and more concise.

However, I consider this far better than feeling the pressure to fill with sermon substance my Word document with seven pages of double-spaced Georgia font on a Saturday afternoon. I will be pleasant to be around at dinner and will know that my sermon manuscript is sitting safely in my manila file folder in my leather satchel on Saturday night—whether or not it will be taken with me into the pulpit on Sunday morning.[39]

The hope is that pastors will pick out best methods and processes for themselves. In cafeteria style, they are to grab a tray and survey the already prepared food items that are lined up in logical culinary order. This project is the three metal rails that trays slide on—it relieves the would-be cook of having to have start from scratch for every meal. This is the goal of the project, to be a fly on the wall as others prepare and observe, taking what

---

[39] Dean Shriver offers, "Careful review of your sermon manuscript will enable you to leave it behind in the pulpit. Preaching without your manuscripts allows you to keep eye contact and makes your delivery more natural and conversational." Dean Shriver, "12 Preaching Tips I Learned from Haddon Robinson," Sermon Central, February 26, 2012, accessed April 25, 2017, https://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/dean-shriver-12-preaching-tips-i-learned-from- haddon-robinson-1187. Planning ahead and having a process for completion affords pastors this good possibility.

makes the most sense and integrating into it their own, seeing the tools in the workshop, borrowing them, but making their own creation. Indeed, this project has freedom within form; it is a skeletal structure on which to hang the sermon's meat.

One possible future initiative could be a personal website resource that functioned as a blog. This could allow for greater depth and interaction with specific aspects of advance sermon planning and preparing sermons. This platform would address topics in a smaller, focused manner. For example, for sermon planning a post addressing this could be titled, "Where Should You Go to Plan a Sermon Calendar?" This would cover details such as locations that are far enough away from one's ministry setting as to provide space and inaccessibility for church members while also having the capabilities on site to be useful (e.g., Internet access). Examples in this vein include sites such as Tim Challies's Informing the Reforming[40] and Kevin DeYoung's DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed.[41]

Recommendations

The following are general suggestions I commend for enhanced ministry by increasing preaching effectiveness and promoting personal peace.

---

[40] Tim Challies, "Informing the Reforming," accessed April 25, 2017, https://www.challies.com.

[41] Kevin DeYoung, "DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed," accessed April 25, 2017, https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung.

Commit to Planning an Advance Sermon Calendar

In addition to Stephen Rummage's *Planning Your Preaching* and Scott Gibson's *Preaching with a Plan*, a shorter, helpful summary is found in Wayne McDill's final chapter of *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*.[42] In trying to mitigate against the fact that "Saturday night panics is a disease peculiar to the preacher,"[43] McDill advises analyzing the difference in style, audience, and purpose of different services, scheduling an extended period to plan a year's calendar and paying attention to all holidays and special emphases, planning various sermon series for the entire calendar period, and going over your plan with other worship leaders for coordinated planning.[44]

Gather Resources for Regular Sermon Research

Assemble those resources (commentaries, reference works, websites, online journals, etc.) that are foundational and have proved the most helpful. This should be in the same vein of Hershael York's response when asked what one book he would commend to every pastor. He answered, "My 'go-to' book from my youth on has been *Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter. It's like a devotional, book-by-book study of the whole Bible. His applicational commentary on what is happening in the text and what it means has helped shape the way I present it. He outlines every book of the Bible and gives an overview with wonderfully devotional lessons. It's unlike anything else."[45]

---

[42] Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), "Planning for Better Preaching," 216-25.

[43] McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 222.

[44] McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 223-24.

[45] Mesa, "10 Books That Belong on Every Pastor's Bookshelf."

Decide on a Sermon Preparation Process

Reference how others preachers prepare, choose a routine that resonates with you, employ it as a template, and fine tune the process with use and as needed. This will require self-knowledge into one's work habits, personality, and how one best receives and processes information.

Elicit Help

Establish focus groups from the congregation to help ensure the sermon is relevant to the preacher's context and community by having regular feedback and evaluation—what Matt Woodley calls "the painful art."[46] Ideally, this group would function in both a preview manner as well as post-sermon evaluative role.[47]

John Ortberg describes how a focus group focuses his preaching and inherently improves it:

> I've found it really helpful, for each series, to use a focus group. I invite eight to ten people to meet for several hours, and I ask them to prepare ahead of time. I ask them to develop a couple of topics they would love to hear addressed, and I ask them to come with detailed ideas: a title for the series, titles for individual messages, what texts I ought to use, what topics or questions ought to be addressed, even potential outlines.
> I also invite them to come up with resources, illustrations, programming ideas, and music for the entire service. Group collaboration is important because other people have questions I don't have, creative ideas that won't occur to me, resources I don't know about, and sins and struggles that are not on my list.
> People love to be part of this process. When people feel they're getting

---

[46] See Matt Woodley, "Sermon Feedback," *Preaching Today*, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/media/podcast/sermon-feedback.html.

[47] An aspect of the project design I used at First Presbyterian for the last sermon series on Galatians is what I termed DARE (Day After Review and Evaluation). Here, all those involved in worship planning took 30 minutes of our 1.5-hour meeting on Monday afternoon to assess Sunday's service.

to speak into what's being preached, there is high built-in motivation to participate.[48]

Establish Stops

For planning and preparation not to bottleneck, create ending points that serve as boundaries and will keep positive momentum. Knowing one's proclivities will help here—if the pastor is more of a researcher and finds himself buried in information and stuck at this sermon preparation step, inaugurate parameters that address this tendency. For example, set time limitations (spending a total of five hours for research) and resource restrictions (consulting only three commentaries). Find a few good writers and resources and spend time reading them in depth. Avoid the temptation to ride the information flood.[49]

The overall thought of this thesis-project is that planning ahead and having a process for sermons will make proclamation more useful. However, the ramifications are not simply seen in a thirty-minute speaking window on Sunday morning. A secondary effect, but more important, is what planning and having a process does to and for the preacher. It is not just about a product (sermon), not only about a process to follow (steps), but also about the proclaimer and what God is doing in him (sanctification). Technique defers to

---

[48] John Ortberg, "Birthing a Sermon," accessed February 22, 2017, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/august-online-only/070718a.html

[49] These safeguards would in effect throttle back spending too much time in the research phase of preparation and give permission to not feel that one has to exhaust everything written about the subject. This is recognition of Parkinson's Law: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion" (Leo Gough, *Parkinson's Law: A Modern-Day Interpretation of a Management Classic* (St. Giles, Oxford: Infinite Ideas Limited, 2011), 17.

transformation. Process submits to peace. Specific mechanics employed are secondary to spiritual maturity embodied.

While "From Study to Sanctuary" has supplied mechanics for sermon planning and preparation, it needs to be customized to the individual pastor and his ministry context to be helpful. The herald should consider such factors as his own makeup, work habits, personality, and resources when thinking about planning to preach and crafting sermons.

However one cobbles together the planning and preparation process, it will take work. The admonition is to prepare in your own unique way and avoid what Spurgeon warns against: "To habitually come into the pulpit unprepared is an unpardonable presumption."[50] Take the parts that are beneficial, modify to make them work in your context and how you work, and personalize it with the goal of preaching that benefits those who listens as they are pointed to good news found in Jesus Christ. May God "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us"[51] bless you as you do.

---

[50] Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 14.

[51] Eph. 3:20.

Appendix A

Planning a Preaching Calendar

The nature of this thesis-project is to explore two areas of sermon construction: planning a preaching calendar and preparing sermons. While the two are distinct, they are not isolated. There exists a cooperative relationship between planning ahead and crafting sermons. Advance scheduling of sermons provides the necessary foundation for sermon preparation. It is the blueprint for building specific sermons on a week-by-week basis. Planning a preaching calendar is the telescope to specific sermon preparation's microscope.

Preaching usually ranks as the minister's most expected and highest ranked responsibility on many surveys by congregation members. Among ministry activities, pastors spend the most time weekly in sermon preparation.[1] Planning for preaching, this expected prioritized activity, naturally follows and should not be rushed.[2] The general consensus among all

---

[1] See "Pastors' Long Work Hours Come at Expense of People, Ministry," LifeWay Research, January 5, 2010, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.lifeway. com/Article/LifeWay-Research-finds-pastors-long-work- hours-can-come-at-the-expense-of-people-ministry.

[2] Planning a preaching calendar is like slow cooking, where the process allows the seasonings and flavor to seep into the food and provide flavoring. This is in contrast to nuking it in the microwave in order to get the job done of providing food. This culinary method is quicker but not as satisfying or nourishing. Indeed, popcorn prepared on the stove versus in a microwave yields different results: "Microwave popcorn, like many processed foods, typically sacrifices nutritional value for flavor and convenience" (Meg Campbell, "Air-Popped Popcorn vs. Microwave Popcorn," LiveStrong, June 12, 2016, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.livestrong.com/article/181064-air-popped-popcorn-vs-microwave-popcorn/). Sermons can suffer the same malady as microwaved popcorn.

literature reviewed is that one should plan a year ahead.[3] There was less

agreement on how long series should last.[4] The two books reviewed for

planning a preaching calendar are summarized in table form below.

Table A.1: Scott Gibson's Planning a Preaching Calendar

Activity	Explanation
Background	Know who you are, whom God has called you to be (strengths, gifts, and weaknesses)
Pray	Seek direction from the Holy Spirit
Describe the spiritual legacy of the church's last twenty-five years	Go through minutes of meetings, do historical research
Map out what preaching ground has been covered	What have been the emphases during the previous pastor's and your own preaching and teaching at the church?
Assess the congregation's spiritual maturity	Infant, Toddler, Child, Adolescent, Young Adult, Middle Age, Older Adult
Think about what it takes to move the congregation to the next level of spiritual maturity	Take into account national, local, church, and pastoral needs
Develop a purpose statement	Draft an overall ministry goal for your tenure at the church. Take into account your own gifts and calling and the congregation's spiritual maturity and needs. Do this in conjunction with counsel from church leaders. Craft a statement similar to, "As a result of my ministry at this church, I want my congregation to . . ."

---

[3] Stephen Rummage cites Winston Pearce: "The twelve-month period gives enough time for a man to observe the content of his preaching objectively, yet is brief enough to change plans if he feels that it is not serving his people's needs effectively nor bringing the greatest glory so his God" (Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching: A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar* [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002], 59). Quarterly planning would be the shortest time frame, according to Rummage.

[4] Michael Duduit, editor of *Preaching*, recommends series that last from four to eight weeks, citing a couple of reasons. First, attention spans are shorter today than in the past, and interest wanes. Second, attendance is not consistent from week to week (Michael Duduit, personal interview with the researcher, July 14, 2014).

Break the overall ministry goals into yearly goals	What will it take in the next five years to move toward the goal? Break each year into goals in your purpose statement.
Cultivate a preaching plan that moves the congregation toward Year 1 goals	"As a result of this year's preaching, I want my congregation to be / know /do..."
Fill in the planning calendar	Get a yearly calendar and fill in the preaching dates for the coming year, noting holidays, vacation, study leave.
Decide on texts to preach	The texts selected are to accomplish the goal of moving toward spiritual maturity. Decide on sermon series. Enter your plan on your calendar with the series, the biblical texts, and possible sermon titles. Make a folder for sermon notes and exegesis.
Pray	

Table A.2: Stephen Rummage's Developing a Preaching Calendar

1. Schedule a planning retreat[5]	• Find an isolated spot that puts you "off the grid." • Plan one year ahead. • Schedule four to six days.[6] • Relinquish all other pastoral duties. • Schedule in summer or the week after Christmas. • Determine the preaching year (civil calendar begins January 1; church year begins after Labor Day; Christian year begins on Advent).

---

[5] Others have fleshed out a much more comprehensive treatment on advance sermon calendar planning and planning retreats. See Jeffrey Hinds, "A Research Project Using the Long-Term Sermon Preparation Model for Preaching the Book of Second Corinthians to Stimulate Spiritual Growth in the Congregation at Fellowship Evangelical Free Church in Dallas, Pennsylvania," DMin thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001; Charles Clark, "Designing a Systematic Approach to Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar," DMin thesis, Temple Baptist Seminary, 2010; William Smith, "Designing a Program of Planned Preaching for the Estes Church of Christ, Henderson, Tennessee," DMin thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1990; and Stephen Johnson, "Preaching for Spiritual Maturity Through the Use of a Long-Range Preaching Plan," DMin thesis for Trinity International University, 2002. Rummage necessarily enumerates broad guidelines.

[6] This gives adequate time for concentrated prayer, contemplation, brainstorming, and sermonic spadework.

2. Gather the materials needed to create your plan	Study Bible 1. Personal calendar—note birthdays, anniversary, vacations, or other occasions that affect preaching timing 2. Church calendar—note church-wide events, Christmas and Easter, Communions, conferences 3. Denominational calendar—note special emphases (e.g., World Communion Sunday) and decide on whether to incorporate 4. Community calendar—note school beginning and ending, city festivals, football schedules 5. Basic Bible study tools. You are planning sermons, not preparing them, but having commentaries on biblical books you are intending to preach from, Bible dictionaries, and other reference works can be helpful. Make sure there is Internet access.
	1. Previous year's sermons and passages. Look back at your or your predecessor's work. 2. Preaching Strategy Worksheet—have a well-articulated strategy in front of you.
3. Review your preaching from previous years	Answer the question, "What ground has been covered?"
4. Determine major series for the coming year	Plan sermon series; decide on book or thematic series *Book series*: A sequence of messages through a book of the Bible. Plan two, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament *Thematic series*: Succession of sermons dealing with a central theme or subject
5. Create a preaching calendar	Fill in the preaching calendar. Make a chart for each month of the year. Coordinate the various calendars that will affect preaching: schedule holidays, special days; sacraments/ordinances; book series and thematic series; other individual sermons.
6. Review and modify plan during the year	Look back over each month with Preaching Strategy Worksheet to make sure the plan fulfills goals.
6. Review and modify plan during the year (continued)	Monitor progress monthly; evaluate overall several times during the year; rethink objectives if necessary.

Table A.3: Stephen Rummage's Preaching Strategy Worksheet

Audience Analysis	Write a description of your congregation in terms of size, demographics, interest, attitude, knowledge level, and spiritual condition. Note any difference in attendance at the various worship services during the week.
Congregational Needs	List perceived needs or problems in the congregation that you intend to address in your preaching plan. Include institutional and personal needs.
Preaching Objectives	List what you hope to accomplish through your preaching ministry in the coming year. Include cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral objectives. Make objectives congregation-focused.

"Marinating": The Main Motivation

Many writers spoke about planning a sermon schedule and its benefits. However, the chief rationale for this writer is that following this procedure allows the pastor to embrace the sermon's thrust personally. Erik Raymond offers:

> The preacher is most effective when the sermon's truth has gripped him. He not only needs to know the subject, but he needs to believe it. As a result, the sermon will seep down into his life and get a hold of him. This brings about conviction, repentance, and change. It is healthy and helpful to model this as a pastor…Be gripped by the truth, and then show how it grips you; in so doing, don't make it about you.[7]

Indeed, when one plans ahead and is not sprinting to the Sunday finish line, the message has time to "marinate in the soul." Many agree and see the value in the preacher embracing the truths of the sermon personally. "The longer the sermon has sat in your soul," Ken Swetland reflects, "the more authentic it's going to be in your communicating it."[8]

---

[7] Erik Raymond, "5 Steps to Improving Your Preaching," The Gospel Coalition, May 16, 2012, accessed February 8, 2017, https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/erikraymond/2012/05/16/5-ways-to-immediately-improve- your-preaching/.

[8] Ken Swetland, personal interview with the researcher, August 15, 2015.

The congruence of the message and the messenger is critical to speaking. The preacher's personal integrity is essential to a sermon's credibility. Taking Swetland's perspective, one sees how authenticity equals effectiveness from Aristotle's ethos. Character is a powerful element of persuasion.

> Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible…It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.[9]

Until the biblical text has preached to the preacher, he is not ready to preach the biblical text to the congregation. Haddon Robinson says, "A commitment to expository preaching should develop the preacher into a mature Christian. As we study our Bible, the Holy Spirit studies us. As we prepare expository sermons, God prepares us…Before we proclaim the message of the Bible to others, we should live with that message ourselves."[10]

Peter Adam similarly asks, "Have I preached this sermon to myself? Are there sins I need to confess before I preach it to others?"[11] Elsewhere, Robinson offers, "Ultimately God is more interested in developing messengers than messages…we must learn to listen to God before speaking for God."[12]

---

[9] *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), viii.

[10] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980, 2001). 116.

[11] Peter Adam, in *Unashamed Workmen: How Expositors Prepare and Preach*, ed. Rhett Dodson (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christina Focus Publications, 2014), 33.

[12] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27. Robinson goes on how to describe how the preacher wrestles with the meaning of the biblical writer as an exegete. Then

The end of his classic expository preaching definition assumes an infusing with the sermon as he advises, "the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."[13]

Many others speak to the necessity of the sermon's finding a home with the pastor and being a "lived in" experience. Lois LeBar explains:

> The teacher must have a thorough grounding in the subject matter he is to teach, and it must be heart knowledge as well as intellectual. There is a vagueness of impression when sacred truths are the curriculum unless there is first a fire burning in the soul of the teacher. More difficult still, the teacher who influences the spirit must live truth for his or her words to have weight.[14]

Similarly, Nancy DeMoss describes the teaching task for her that naturally requires time, effort, and embracing:

> The process of preparing to speak is an intense one for me. I agonize to determine what the Lord wants me to teach; I wrestle with the passages involved . . . I labor to put the material together in a form that is understandable . . . throughout the process, I ask the Holy Spirit to search my heart, to shine the light of His Word into every nook and cranny of my life, and to show me where I don't measure up to the truth I am about to proclaim. Before opening my mouth to speak, I spend time in prayer, pleading with God for a fresh anointing of His Spirit on my life and lips, and interceding for those who will hear the message.[15]

Walter Wangarin vividly frames the essence of having the sermon be not a speech to deliver but a message that touches the preacher's soul:

---

preachers struggle with how God wants to change us before thinking through what God wants to say to the congregation through us.

[13] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 12.

[14] Lois E. LeBar, *Education That Is Christian* (1958; Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1998), 109.

[15] Nancy DeMoss, *A Place of Quiet Rest* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2002), 23.

> Preaching is, not only, a function of our intellects. We are doing more than passing pure thought to people. Our souls are required of us—that we believe what we say. Moreover, to believe means that we ourselves have experienced what we declare: it's a part of our personal histories, real in our suffering and joy, real in our sin, real in forgiveness and grace and freedom. So we become a standing evidence of what we preach, and the whole of us—soul and mind and body and experience—participates in the holy moment of preaching.[16]

Planning ahead and preparing sermons with enough lead time to allow for reflective margins and unhurriedness is ideal.

General Benefits for Planning Sermons: A Survey

The table below enumerates other gains realized when forecasting sermon direction.

Table A.4: Advantages for Advance Sermon Planning

| Familiarity with the material | Scott Gibson observes, "When prepared so late and it's so fresh, it's not familiar."[17] |
| Ability to have an integrative, holistic approach to worship[18] | In *Preaching as Worship*, Michael Quicke advocates that a natural outgrowth of advance planning is that it gives all those involved in the worship service planning a chance to collaborate and craft the service |

---

[16] Walter Wangarin, "Why I Pace Before I Preach," Sermon Central, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/walter-wangerin-jr-why-i-pace-before-i-preach-1070.

[17] Doctor of Ministry Residency, "Pastor as Preacher," January 29, 2011, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, class notes. Bryan Chapell notes how completing sermons too early can douse their "spontaneous fire" (Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994, 2005], 205).

[18] Bryan Chapell, in *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), looks at how different traditions seek to express gospel truth by the architecture of their liturgy. How the preached Word interfaces with other liturgical elements is discussed. At a basic level, planning ahead and knowing a thematic emphasis for a particular passage facilitates this goal. David Currie's forthcoming *The Big Idea of Biblical Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017) will further the discussion by helping pastors and worship leaders develop services with biblical content that fits their local contexts.

	in a way that reinforces a main theme and is creative in doing so.
Gives time for preachers to think through ways to engage listeners in delivery matters[19]	Movement, involving emotions, asking provocative questions all help keep attention[20]
Makes your "radar up"	Activates alertness where one notices possible content culled from everyday life and serves as an "idea magnet." The preacher has a heightened sense for what could communicate to his congregation[21] as he observes life and the human condition.[22]

---

[19] Preparation needs to take time to make sure that listeners are engaged during the sermon. Patricia Wolfe, *Brain Matters*: *Translating Research Into Classroom Experience* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD Press, 9), states, "If students are not paying attention, they are not engaged, and hence they are not learning." If learning is curtailed, the effectiveness of the sermon is lessened. Wolfe's research suggests that people are more likely to pay attention to things that move, that are novel, and that involve emotions. As there is time during preparation of sermons and not a rush to get done, the preacher can focus on these factors to increase sermon effectiveness. For example, since movement attracts attention, preachers can practice and anticipate every opportunity to move, whether it be changing pace, alternating between sitting and standing if possible.

[20] Wolfe also talks about the importance of novelty and how when anything is perceived as unusual, the brain releases norepinephrine that engages it. Thinking through how to startle by doing something different takes time and thought. Doing something as simple as reading the Scripture passage in dialogue with someone else could help toward this end. Getting ahead in my preparation process enabled me to order an old-fashioned scale to make illustrate how people tend to weigh good deeds and bad deeds to be right with God. Wolfe also discusses how the brain's amygdala screens sensory information to determine what is worthy of attention; it focuses on information that has strong emotional content (*Brain Matters*, 88). Stories, music, asking listeners if they agree or disagree with a provocative statement—these all take time to incorporate.

This perspective is over and against a more traditional view of preaching that exults Jonathan Edwards, who held his sermon manuscript right in front of his face. It sounds more spiritual, but is it lazy and not taking into account a helpful use of the communication arts?

How much can employing what Wolfe talks about and trying to be creative in general devolve into "Prop King and His Bag of Tricks" and become gimmicky?

[21] 21 Illustrations are more easily culled from everyday life. Referring to a book of sermon illustrations is not as helpful because the preacher is collecting content which people are not familiar. It also helps make illustrations concrete when the preacher is on the ladder of abstraction's bottom rung. It forces the sermon to be more than a desk event in that it ties the preacher to the world of his hearers and helps contextualize.

Helps begin with the end in mind	Gives a roadmap as to where the destination is for the preacher
Encourages an abundance of material from which to choose sermon content	Martyn Lloyd-Jones advises preachers to be "little squirrels gathering acorns to store up for the months ahead." This is what advance planning does.[23]
"Life happens"	Sermon construction itself often takes longer than originally anticipated. Add to this funerals and tragedies that occur and the need to accommodate for the natural contingencies that happen with life—a child gets sick; the laptop locks up. I seem to overestimate what can be done in a given day, week, or month and plan for no interruptions or glitches.[24]
Keeps your preaching balanced	Most preachers have their favorite topics to preach on. A calendar avoids a one-sided presentation of Scripture.
Reduces the stress of not knowing what you will preach on next	Preaching through a biblical book, based on a set calendar, will keep one accountable and force preaching on a variety of topics.
Shows leadership	When church elders and leaders know that the pastor has thought through what he will be preaching on in a long-term way, it gives more credibility and shows that preaching is taken seriously.
Enables assistance for sermon preparation from your leaders	If you are intentional about this, you can communicate your calendar to certain people in the church and allow for them to gather supplementary material for you (i.e., illustrations).

---

[22] The preacher will find himself whipping out his iPhone to take a picture of a sign at a convenience store or a bumper sticker on the car in front of him. He will corral thoughts that pop into his brain on his phone's voice memo application or scrawl on a nearby piece of paper for later reference.

Jonathan Edwards is rumored to often arrive at his destination riding his horse with notes pinned on his outer coat of thoughts for writing and sermons. Joel Gregory encourages collecting and recording: "When you see it, write it down. The dullest pencil is better than the sharpest mind" (Joel Gregory, "7 Lessons to Observe As You Prepare to Preach," Ethics Daily, March 20, 2014, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.ethicsdaily.com/7-lessons-to-observe-as-you-prepare-to-preach-cms-21629).

[23] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), 218.

[24] While Murphy's Law is not deterministic, most pastors' weeks are filled with the unexpected, from the "Pastor, you got a minute?" that becomes a two-hour conversation to the funeral that demands significant time and energy in a compressed amount of time.

Honors the needs of the preacher's family	Mitigates constantly thinking about the sermon and offers the possibility of undivided attention during family time
Having the sermon previewed before preached can catch blind spots	Debunking Santa Claus with young children in the room; having others filtering your blind spots of phrasings, cultural references, etc.
Having the sermon previewed before preaching can catch theological questions and theologically questionable content	If one is working at the last minute and comes across a theological enigma, he often does not have time to research it thoroughly in order to come to more definitive conclusions. This can result in trouble for the pastor who does not fully do his homework.[25]
Allows for the possibility of a steady diet of Old Testament and New Testament, different genres	This can mitigate the pastor's personal preferences. This allows for a balanced homiletical diet, allowing the pastor to ask what issues the congregation is facing and to make sure that there is a variety of genres in his preaching rather than a focus on a particular section of Scripture to the exclusion of others.[26]
Encourages a multi-perspectival approach to sermon formation	Jeff Arthurs notes that this is one of postmodernism's positive contributions wherein preaching is viewed as a communal event.[27] This allows for feed forward focus groups.

---

[25] A theological flap brewed over a megachurch pastor substituting the word *sayings* when preaching on the Decalogue (Ron Barnett, "Calling 10 Commandments 'Sayings' Draws Ire of Baptists," *USA Today,* January 21, 2015, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/01/21/ten-commandments-or-promises/22103521/).

[26] When the preacher does not take time to plan, it is easy to default to what is familiar. Planning ahead give margins so that variety in preaching is more likely to happen. For example, preaching a first-person narrative sermon is going to probably take more time, as it is not as familiar. If a pastor's sermons are too predictable it lessens effectiveness for the congregation. With physical exercise, the body gets used to the same routine and exercise loses its effectiveness for overall health because the body becomes more efficient and therefore does not work as hard. However, "muscle confusion"—changing the workout routine to prevent plateaus and reengaging muscles—is good for gain; it is effective. (See Lou Schuler and Alwyn Cosgrove, *The New Rules of Lifting: Six Basic Moves for Maximum Muscle* [New York: Avery, 2006], 67).

[27] Arthurs, personal interview, August 16, 2015. Related, though it may be somewhat generational, is how the planning and preparation are to be seen as far as primary responsibility? Whose is it? It seems older preaching texts do not talk as much or at all about involving others for feedback. John Broadus's classic *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* does not mention it. Today, we are conditioned by technology like collaborative software where popular sites such as Wikipedia are

Gives creative team a chance to shape liturgy and content[28]	If the preacher uses others to help in a collaborative setting, it is a must to plan ahead.
Gives preaches a chance to think creatively	During "mull time" the brain is making connections that the person is unaware. The human brain is synthetic, but it must have content to synthesize.[29]
If preaching without notes, allows for familiarity	There is not a last-minute rush to try to get the sermon in one's head or overdependence on a manuscript
Allows one to have voice vs. ventriloquist	When one plans ahead, one is in a position to speak from a personal voice perspective and not as a passive ventriloquist. Planning ahead and having a process gives margins to make the sermon one's own with insights and thoughts forged well ahead of the preaching date. When this is not the case, desperation can set in and the preacher, like a drowning man, will reach for anything than can buoy him for the moment. His sermons can be taken from others, and while he is articulating the words, he is in a more passive position of taking the thoughts of others and parroting them—his mouth is being moved by another, an "echo."[30]

ingrained in Internet use. Wiki as a noun means "a website that allows anyone to add, delete, or revise content using a web browser" (blog.dictionay.com). The idea here is that everyone has a say. This reality, even expectation, can bleed into the sermon construction process. Movements such as the Emergent Church are examples of this idea of collaboration flowering. Even the way office space is arranged has changed to foster collaboration (see "Say Goodbye to the Office Cubicle," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2013). Are the days gone when the solitary pastor retires to his study and produces the sermon for a group of people?

[28] If liturgy can mean "the work of the people," it seems that having collaboration is essential for this to happen.

[29] See Brian Stein, "Neural Mechanisms for Synthesizing Sensory Information and Producing Adaptive Behaviors," PubMed, accessed February 8, 2017, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9835401.

[30] John Piper writes, "It seems, frankly, utterly unthinkable to me that authentic preaching would be the echo of another person's encounter with God's word rather than a trumpet blast of my own encounter with God's word. Now to be sure, my sermon should be an echo. It should be an echo of the voice of God. But not an echo of an echo of the voice of God." See "My Pastor Uses Pre-Made Sermons—Should I Be Concerned?" desiringGod, April 4, 2016, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/my-pastor-uses-pre-made-sermons-should-i-be-concerned.

Allows for a less developed sermon filing system	One cannot be as diligent with the large filing cabinet with yellow crinkly newspaper or manila folders bloated with scraps of paper, articles, and such for some time when you might use them. Rather, by planning a year in advance the pastor will have enough lead time. If, for example, preachers are six months out for a series or book, six weeks out for a Scripture passage and theme, and six days out where they have done the heavy lifting for the sermon, examples and illustrations that add color or texture will present themselves.
Acknowledges time constraints on the pastorate	Secondary tasks crowd out time for sermon planning and preparation; there is always more to do than time. Without careful planning, "Saturday night panics" might become the norm.
Allows for oral practice	Rehearsing the sermon out loud affords the communicator the ability to detect vocal awkwardness, uneven transitions, where he is unclear on direction, words that are easy to mispronounce, etc. Ed Welch advocates that unhurried time is needed for rehearsing to evaluate if the sermon is simple, coherent, and clear. This can avoid embarrassment during delivery.[31]
Respects the call for excellence in ministry	Giving our best to ministry in general and preaching specifically will be helped by careful planning; one seldom drifts into excellence.
Allows for critical distance	How the brain functions when it engages, disengages, reengages; writing for the ear; not unlike writing drafts of papers, where the revision process allows for critical distance
Mitigates the inevitable writer's block	Time margins allow the preacher can stop and return with a fresh perspective. See Haddon Robinson, "Busting Through Sermon Block."[32]
Allows for the preacher to develop his voice rather than an "echo"[33]	"Voice" individual style as well as individual authenticity and authority. Planning ahead benefits both. If the sermon is viewed as primarily an oral

---

[31] Ed Welch, "8 Things I've Learned About Public Speaking," Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, December 9, 20114, accessed February 8, 2017, https://www.ccef.org/resources/blog/eight-things-i-ve-learned-about-public-speaking.

[32] Haddon Robinson, "Busting Through Sermon Block," Winter 1993, *Leadership Journal*, accessed September 25, 2016, http://www.christianity today.com/pastors/1993/winter/93l4094.html.

	event, a sermon manuscript is never an end in itself. Cleophus LaRue explains, "What is written is but an 'arrested performance' lying dormant on the page that can only be brought to life through the skillful articulation and mastery of the preacher's *viva vox* (living voice)."[34]
Time is not wasted on searching for what to preach	Alastair Begg comments, "there is a consistency of quality because you know where you are going."[35] This is true in other fields: A chef plans meals to secure ahead of time the ingredients needed; a coach plans what is done in practices so there is order and expectation.
Guards against plagiarism	As I listen to sermons, I hear much borrowed. Is this because there was not adequate time for planning and preparation, and desperation and cutting corners by preachers? The desperation with a deadline is neutralized.
Saves time and focuses energy	Time is not spent searching for what to preach on; energy is directed toward the exegetical process— "clearing the underbrush."[36]
Have less stress	"Saturday night specials" are not the norm

---

[33] In speaking from my own experience, I know that when I am not prepared, I parrot. I use clichés. I get desperate because of the deadline and have to "get up something to say." This is rarely my best work. I do not speak from depth but find myself echoing someone else. Planning ahead and not having these dynamics present gives me the confidence that I am preaching authentically from who I am, what I call "voice."

[34] Cleophus LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2000), 7.

[35] "How Does Alistair Begg Prepare for His Sermons/Teachings?" September 25, 2012, accessed February 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= MXj6MLQ8138.

[36] This makes sermon preparation more reflexive rather than every week gaining momentum on where to even begin. Charles Duhigg profiles the Indianapolis Colts' defense during their 2007 Super Bowl championship. He describes how head coach Tony Dungy overhauled the defense to where they played on instinct, "not having to think about what they are to do next and therefore lose precious reaction time" (Charles Duhigg: *The Power of Habit: Why We do What We Do in Business and in Life* [New York: Random House, 2014). The same principle can be set for advance sermon planning.

Disadvantages to Planning a Preaching Calendar

The author can think of few reasons to not plan a preaching calendar. One reason is that a sermon planned and finished well ahead of time could lack the urgency and immediacy of a message prepared closer to the preaching event. Chapell notes how completing sermons too early can douse their "spontaneous fire."[37] Having less time between preparation and delivery could give some more familiarity with the sermon in that there are not as many extraneous factors to distract the pastor.

Also, the sermon could be in the forefront of his mind and therefore receive more focused attention than a message that is not as urgent and prepared too far in advance.[38] The sermon could get "cold and stale."[39] Derek Thomas prefers the Saturday night rush;[40] Joel Gregory stayed up all night on many Saturday nights/Sunday mornings to finish sermons.[41]

Planned preaching can be seen as more culturally and denominationally specific in that some traditions stress its importance while

---

[37] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 205

[38] Rather than fear and panic, it could bring needed eustress, or good stress, that drives performance. See Hans Selye, *Stress Without Distress* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1974), 129.

[39] Thabiti Anyabwile thinks so and therefore does not start his sermon preparation until Thursday. See "The Front Porch—Sermon Preparation," July 15, 2014, accessed February 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdfubXUp-IY.

[40] Thomas comments, "Many sermons seem overcooked and lack spontaneity . . . I've always been better when under pressure and the energy of the 'Saturday night fever' has more than once been a terrifying, yet rewarding experience" (Colin Adams, "10 Questions for Expositors," Unashamed Workman, January 16, 2008, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.unashamedworkman.org/10-questions/derek-thomas/).

[41] See *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church* (Ft. Worth, TX: Summit Group, 1994).

others see it as restrictive. There is the Reformed dictum of doing everything "decently and in order" versus a charismatic perspective that values more spontaneity. Pentecostal pastor Joseph Andino related how in his Pentecostal tradition there is a heavy emphasis on the here-and-now work of the Holy Spirit coupled with an inherent suspicion of education wherein there is a conflict between the two—one can preclude the other. He further discussed that within the Pentecostal camp, a Hispanic context is more suspicious of planning than an Anglo one. While he sees this as an oversimplification, he did note there is a natural progression of a more educated pastorate that leads to more ministry structure that has the "trickle-down effect" of more advance sermon planning. Andino sums up a Pentecostal perspective by stating, "We want to be free in allowing the Holy Spirit to have his way during the sermon; the Spirit gives life, the letter kills."[42] He strikes a good balance by saying, "The disadvantage to too much planning in sermon preparation is the danger of ignoring the Holy Spirit working in your heart where the outline or the planned calendar becomes a higher priority than the Holy Spirit. I advocate being meticulous in preparation, theologically driven and exegetically sound but at delivery the preacher must be sensitive to promptings of the Holy Spirit in the heart."[43]

Some biblical passages seem to be less concerned with preparation and rather focus on a dependence on the Holy Spirit when taken at face value. Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) was not on his calendar—topic-wise or time-wise. Paul in I Corinthians 2:4 says that his "preaching and my message

---

[42] Joseph Andino, personal interview with the researcher, August 12, 2015.

[43] Joseph Andino, personal interview with the researcher, August 12, 2015.

were not with wise and persuasive words but a demonstration of the Spirit's power." Jesus was not concerned about a planned out schedule when he reassured, "When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say" (Matt 10:19). While a fuller exegetical examination of these and other passages is not within the scope of the present study, the author would generally assess them as not negating preparation but unique in their place in redemptive history and context; they are not to be considered normative for the church's weekly worship.

There also is the danger of getting in a rut if one continues to follow the same routine. Ruts can be good in order to reduce energy and effort spent in plowing new ground, but there can be a danger in getting too complacent. In such things as exercise, the body naturally adapts to new routines and becomes more efficient in doing so. This happens in about six weeks. Without "muscle confusion," a homeostatic set point occurs and gains in fitness are plateaued.[44]

In considering some disadvantages of advance planning, the main weaknesses center on rigidity and the Holy Spirit's role in preaching. A preaching calendar is to serve the pastor and worship planners but not dictate what can and cannot be changed because "it's not on the schedule." A slavish adherence to a plan and overdependence on a preaching calendar can ignore events that need to be addressed. For example, national tragedies and local misfortunes or issues that could not have been known and therefore

---

[44] See "Are You Confused About Muscle Confusion?" Health and Fitness Advisory, June 5, 2013, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.fitnessadvisory.org /2013/06/05/are-you-confused-about-muscle-confusion/.

planned for six months ago need not be ignored because of a predetermined course.[45]

When looking at the Holy Spirit's role in preaching, there are a variety of perspectives on how this has bearing on advance preaching calendars and preparing sermons. Some object to an emphasis on planning and preparation because it negates the Holy Spirit's role. This view can be influenced by one's theological tradition. Oletta Wald frames the balance well in describing the Holy Spirit in studying the Bible:

> This emphasis on the logical approach does not discount the importance of the Holy Spirit as the revealer of truth. The Holy Spirit will guide you as you observe, interpret, evaluate, apply, and actualize. It is precisely the Spirit's involvement in the process that enables you to be alert in your observations, discerning in your interpretations, honest in your evaluations and applications, and courageous in actualizing the truths in your own life.[46]

---

[45] The Sunday after September 11, 2001, the church I was serving as an associate pastor decided to not change the schedule for the coming Sunday and continue with a deacon ordination service. There was a missed opportunity to give voice in a worship context to what people were thinking and feeling.

[46] Oletta Wald, *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 43.

Appendix B

Literature Review of Authors'
Sermon Preparation Methods

Table B.1: Haddon Robinson's Ten Stages Approach to Sermon Preparation

Background • Expository preaching definition: "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."[1] • An effective sermon centers on one major idea, the "Big Idea."	
The Tools of the Trade: Getting Started	
Stage 1: Select the Passage	Catch the Rabbit[2] • Base the sermon on a literary unit of biblical thought
Stage 2: Study the Passage	Gather Your Books, Gather Your Notes • Dig into the passage: examine context, observe details such as vocabulary and grammatical structure, use commentaries, lexicons, grammars, Bible dictionaries, etc.

Stage 3:
Discover the
Exegetical
Idea
	Formulate the Subject and Complement
	Subject: What is the biblical writer talking about?
	Complement: What is the biblical writer saying about what he is talking about?
	    Analyze major and supporting assertions; note the specific genre and conventions unique to it.
	    State how the parts of the passage relate to the idea.

The Road from Text to Sermon: Merging the Biblical World, Modern World, and Our Own World	
Stage 4: Analyze the Exegetical Idea	What does this mean? (Explanation) • Does the writer explain his statements or define his terms? • Does he assume the original readers understood and needed no explanation?

---

[1] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980, 2001), 36.

[2] These verbs that expand on each stage are not paired specifically with each by Robinson. Rather, the author did so from the content in order to further clarify the goal of each stage.

	• Are there concepts, terms, or connections that modern readers will need explained? Is it true? (Proof) • Is the writer arguing, proving, or defending at length some concept that hearers would probably accept (Jesus was human)? • Is the writer arguing or defending a concept that your listeners might not accept and need to therefore understand the argument of the passage (slaves, be obedient to masters)? • Is the writer assuming the validity of an idea that your listeners may not? • Do listeners need to be convinced of what the passage states is the case (Jesus is the only way to God)? What difference does it make? (Application) • Where does the writer develop and apply his idea? • Is the writer presenting an idea that he does not apply directly but will later? • How do you apply this truth to listeners today? Notes • Accurate exegesis is basic to perceptive application; what does the modern listener share and not share with the original listener? • Application comes from the writer's theological purpose; what does the passage teach about God and how does this truth work out in experience?
The Arrow and the Target: Loading the Bullet, Not the Buckshot	
Stage 5: Formulate Homiletical Idea	Restate the Exegetical Idea in one memorable sentence. • In light of the listeners' knowledge and experience, convert the Exegetical Idea and state it in the most exact, memorable sentence possible, the "Big Idea."
Stage 6: Determine the Sermon's Purpose	What should happen as result of the sermon? • Call for action, knowledge, insight, attitude, skill
The Shapes Sermons Take: Packaging for Delivery	
Stage 7: Decide Shape, Choose Form	Employ Deductive, Inductive, or Combination sermon form • Deductive: idea is stated completely in Introduction, developed throughout sermon (idea to be explained, proposition to be proved, principle to be applied) • Inductive: Introduction leads to the first point with idea emerging in conclusion (a story told) • Combination: Subject to be completed, Inductive-Deductive
Stage 8: Outline the Sermon	Fashion a Blueprint of Unity, Order, and Progress
Making Dry Bones Live: Fattening Up the Starved Skeleton	

Stage 9: Fill in the Sermon Outline	• Add meat to bones by explaining, proving, applying, amplifying, restating, defining • Use factual information, quotations, narration, illustrations, etc.
Start with a Bang and Quit All Over: Taking Off and Landing the Plane	
Stage 10: Prepare the Introduction and Conclusion	Introduction • Commands attention, uncovers need, introduces the sermon's body, is personal to the congregation, exposes listeners to the Big Idea Conclusion • Provides finality, asks for a verdict, gives a complete view of Big Idea and brings it to a burning focus, driving home its truth Vary conclusions • Restate the major points to the Big Idea; tie up loose ends (not a "re-preaching") • Use a quotation, a prayer, a question ("What can listeners do to carry out Sunday morning's sermon to Monday morning's world?") • Give practical suggestions on how to translate scriptural truth to life experience, ask them to visualize, dream • Do not introduce new material, stop directly

Table B.2: David Buttrick's *Homiletic* Process

1. Exegete the biblical text	
2. Analyze the passage as plot	Seek to determine structure of the author's ideas
3. Identify theological principles in the passage	Find the "theological field of meaning"
4. Identify relevant comparisons with our lives today	"Analogies"
5. Write a list of ideas, the field of understanding	Blending the results of Stages 1-4, sketch a theological outline with contemporary relevance
6. Convert the field of understanding into a sequence of moves	Select one idea as the point of entry. This is not the sermon's introduction but the first idea from the field of understanding that fits the rhetorical purposes Choose from the field of understanding a sequence of ideas that flow in a way natural to human consciousness; should flow like a conversation rather than a list of topics. Movement is not taken from sections of the text but from the field of understanding. (This sequence of ideas— moves—is the basic structure of the sermon.)

7. Write an expanded sketch of each move	Brainstorm phrases, words, illustrations, images, lived experiences relevant to the move
8. Critique the sketch for theological precision and how hearers will understand it	Plan how to improve the sketch of each move, think about the possible shape of each move
9. Write the final structure of moves	Draft a detailed outline in conversational, full-sentence form (not a word-for-word manuscript)
10. Write the full sermon manuscript	

Table B.3: John Stott's Steps for Preparing a Sermon

1. Choose text and meditate	• Read the text, reread it, reread it, and read it again. • Probe it, chew on it, bore into it, soak in it.
2. Ask questions of the text	These questions include: • What does it mean? What did it mean when first spoken or written? What did the author intend to affirm or condemn or promise or command? What does it say? What is its contemporary message? How does it speak to us today? Note: Keep these questions distinct but together—the text's meaning is of purely academic interest unless one goes on to discern its message for today. One cannot discover its contemporary message without first wrestling with its original meaning.
3. Combine diligent study with fervent prayer	Studying combined with humble pleading to God for illumination by the Spirit of truth. Like Moses, "Show me your glory," and Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Stott: "I have always found it helpful to do as much of my sermon preparation as possible on my knees, with the Bible open before me, in prayerful study." R. W. Dale: "Work without prayer is atheism; and prayer without work is presumption."

4. Isolate the dominant thought of the text	- Every text has a main theme, an overriding thrust.[3] - A sermon is not a lecture; it aims to convey only one major message. The congregation will - forget details of the message, but they should remember the dominant thought, because all the sermon's details should be marshaled to help them grasp its message and feel its power. - Once the text's principal meaning has been determined, express it in a "categorical proposition."
5. Arrange material to serve the dominant thought	- Organize in a way that enables the text's main thrust to make maximum impact - Let each text supply its own structure, outline form - Be precise; use simple, clear, vivid language; discard irrelevant material
6. Remember the power of imagination, illustration	Imagination: the power of the mind by which it conceives of invisible things, and is able to present them as though they were visible to others. - Listeners have trouble grasping abstract concepts—we need them converted into pictures and examples. - Exert your greatest effort for illustrations that reinforce and serve the dominant thought. Think of illustrations as windows that let in light on our subject and help people to more clearly see and appreciate it. - Beware of illustrations that draw too much attention (to themselves instead of the subject) or which take people away from the main point.
7. Add introduction	(Craft after finished with the body so text is not twisted to fit Introduction) Introduction - Arouses interest, stimulates curiosity, and whets the appetite for more - Introduces the theme by leading the hearers into it Examine length: Don't make introduction too long or too

---

[3] Jowett: "I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching…until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as a crystal. I find the getting of that sentence is the hardest, the most exacting and the most fruitful labor in my study…I do not think any sermon ought to be preached, or even written, until that sentence has emerged, clear and lucid as a cloudless moon" (Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 224).

	short. "Men have a natural aversion to abruptness, and delight in a somewhat gradual approach. A building is rarely pleasing in appearance without a porch or some sort of inviting entrance."
8. Craft conclusion	- Avoid endlessly circling and never landing. - Avoid ending too abruptly. - A true conclusion goes beyond recapitulation to personal application. - Call the congregation to act! "If there is no summons, there is no sermon!" - The precise application of your sermon depends on the character of the text. The dominant thought points us to how people should act in response. - Does the text call to repentance or stimulate faith? Does it evoke worship, demand obedience, summon to witness, or challenge to service? (The text itself determines the particular response desired.) - Consider the composition of your congregation. It is good to let your mind wander over the church family and ask prayerfully what message God might have for each from your text. Consider their unique circumstances, weaknesses, strengths, and temptations.
9. Write out sermon	- Get to this stage earlier - Get something on paper; do not endlessly noodle on vague notes. (Writing obliges you to think straight.)
10. Edit it again	- View hitting your time goal as just as essential to its overall effectiveness as anything else you do. - People will take more away if you say less. - Ruthlessly cut the unneeded and extra. Look for places where you can be more concise. - Err on the side of cutting things—especially long quotes.
11. Pray over message	"We need to pray until our text comes freshly alive to us, the glory shines forth from it, the fire burns in our heart, and we begin to experience the explosive power of God's Word within us."

Table B.4: Fred Craddock's Two Stages of Sermon Preparation

Stage 1: Discover a message, not a sermon
State that message in one clear, positive sentence.
This is the Research and Rough Sketch phase.
"This is what I want to say."

Stage 2: Craft a sermon, draw from the message
• Work on the art and craft.
• "This is the way I want to say it."
• Let time lapse between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Table B.5: Sidney Greidanus's Ten Steps to Christocentric Sermons

1. Select the text	Congregational needs should be at the forefront
2. Know the text in context	• Read text multiple times in its literary context. • Engage the text before turning to commentaries—they are the servant • and not the master in sermon development.
3. Outline the structure	• Engage original languages, especially Hebrew, to chart the literary structure with greater precision.
4. Interpret the text in its historical setting	Done on three interpretive levels: • Literary: How does it mean? What did it mean in the context of this book? • Historical: What was the author's intended meaning to the original hearers? What needs of the hearers did the author seek to address? • Theological: What does the text reveal about God, his redemptive acts, covenant, and will for his chosen people?
5. Derive text theme and goal	Answer the question, "What is the biblical author saying in this passage?"
6. Place text in the context of the Bible	Seek to understand in view of the whole canon and redemptive history. • Literary interpretation becomes canonical interpretation. (What does the text mean in the context of the whole Bible?) • Historical interpretation becomes redemptive-historical interpretation. (How does the passage function in the context of God's all- encompassing story from creation to new creation?) • Theocentric interpretation becomes Christocentric interpretation. (What does the passage mean in light of Jesus Christ?)

7. Formulate the sermon theme and goal	Sermon theme: a single assertion of the textual theme Sermon goal: a succinct statement of what the preacher seeks to do in preaching the sermon
8. Select a sermon form	The form needs to respect the form of the text and achieve the sermon's goal.
9. Draft a sermon outline	While there is flexibility, outlines should have unity, symmetry, and movement to a climax.
10. Write in oral form	Helps with oral precision and expression, encourages economy of words, improves style

Table B.6: Bryan Chapell's Sermon Preparation Broad Steps[4]

1. Spiritual preparation	Piety, planning, prayer
2. Read and digest the thought of the text	
3. Identify the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)	
4. Research the text	History, grammar, exegetical outline, issues
5. Consider specific applications	
6. Collect developmental matter	Quotes, statistics, illustrations, key terms, commentary data
7. Create a homiletical outline	proposition, main points
8. Place developmental matter in outline	
9. Write conclusion and introduction	
10. Write sermon body	
11. Reduce to outline	
12. Practice	
13. Pray	
14. Preach	

---

[4] A slight adaptation of "A Sermon Preparation Pyramid," Appendix 3, Figure A3.1 (Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009], 345).

Table B.7: Bryan Chapell's Christ-Centered Method[5]

Stage 1: The Process of Explanation	
The Labyrinth	Break the myth—biblical truth does not require the expertise of the spiritually elite. Expository preaching sheds ordinary light on the path that leads to understanding the text. Preparing sermons guides on how to focus the light.
The Path of Preparation	Six questions to ask: What does the text mean? How do I know what the text means? What concerns caused the text to be written? What do we share in common with those to whom the text was written? How should people now respond to the truths of the text? What is the most effective way I can communicate the meaning of the text? Four necessary steps: Observe Interrogate Exegete: what does the text say? Outline: How does it fit together? Background: Where does it fit? Relate Organize Sequence and order Exhaust and cover Highlight and subordinate
The Light of Presentation	State and place: Articulate what the text means and the place you find it in the text Prove: Restatement Narration Description and definition Exegesis Argument (Stating what you know and how you know) "More light": Seek God to shed more light on the Word

---

[5] An expanded version taken from Part 2 of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, "Preparation of Expository Sermons" (Chapell, 103-268).

Stage 2: Outlining and Structure[6]	
Employ the F-O-R-M principle	**F**aithful to the text
	Obvious from the text
	Related to the Fallen Condition Focus
	Moving toward a climax
Stage 3: The Pattern of Illustration	
Orientation and Definition	Illustrations help give communicative power, bring truth to life by demonstrating and applying; they are stories whose details allow listeners to identify with an experience that further elaborates, develops, and/or discloses the explanation of scriptural principles and allows a listener to experience a sermon's truth
Why Illustrate?	• Wrong reasons: to entertain, to try to spoon feed a complicated sermon, to keep people awake • Right reasons: to respond to cultural challenges in listening and accommodate by "turning the ear into the eye" with the need to promote understanding through experience; meaningful thought flourishes when tied to reality; people seize images more readily than propositions, Jesus and the apostles used them, Scripture guides use; primary purpose is not to clarify but to motivate
How to Illustrate	• Take a slice out of life: from a snapshot from life, capture a mood, moment, or memory in a narrative frame • Tell a story: introduce creatively, use vivid and pertinent details, rain key terms (consistent terminology), create crisis, conclude meaningfully
Stage 4: The Practice of Application	
The Functions	As the present, personal consequence of scriptural truth, it connects truth to everyday lives: "this is what you must do about the problem, need, or fault on this basis of what this passage means"; gives exposition a target on which to focus with the FCF in mind
The Components	Four key questions: 1. What does God require of me? Instructional Specificity) 2. Where does God require it of me? (Situational Specificity) 3. Why must I do what God requires? (Motivation) **4.** How can I do what God requires? (Enablement)

[6] Chapell's chapter on outlining is more than fifty pages. Rather than detail the minutia, FORM gives an overall orientation. Chapell states, "The bottom line for structure simply requires that all expository sermons have FORM . . . when preachers meet these criteria, sermons of many different shapes represent Scripture and strike the heart with precision and clarity" (Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 162).

Stage 5: Introductions, Conclusion, and Transitions	
Introductions	
Purposes of Introductions	To arouse interest in the message by involving their imagination, sense of wonder, appreciation of the past, fear of the future, outrage, compassion To introduce the subject of the message To make the subject personal To prepare for the proposition
Types of Introductions	What one has experienced or read Human-interest accounts
	Simple assertions, startling statements, provocative questions, cataloging, interesting quotations, striking statistics Vary from week to week; do not always use same approach
Conclusions and Transitions	
Purposes of Conclusions	To arouse interest in the message by involving their imagination, sense of wonder, appreciation of the past, fear of the future, outrage, compassion To introduce the subject of the message To make the subject personal To prepare for the proposition
Types of Conclusions	• Grand style: heightened manner of expression and choice of words, intensified delivery • Human interest: "Preachers who ethically use a human-interest account to elicit honest emotions, stir genuine feelings, and provoke appropriate convictions are following biblical injunctions to urge, persuade, and encourage."
Cautions and Hints for Conclusions	• Cautions: poems and quotations are hard to grasp and flowery expression is not appreciated, use of rhetorical questions, limit • Hints: frame in your own words with eye contact, end with hope, employ wraparounds, brevity (two to three paragraphs), focused, ends poignantly, uses telling words, last sentence important
Purposes of Transitions	• Sews together all the other sermon parts, aiding flow, progress, and beauty • Demonstrates the relationship between the parts and provides psychological, emotional, and aesthetic links while harmonizing the conceptual and emotional rhythms that run through a sermon • Signals progress and direction, transitions • review where gone, preview where going, secures an immediate matter to a larger theme, ties to larger theme
Types of Transitions	• Knitting statements: "not only, but also" • Dialogical questions: anticipates questions in listeners' minds and asks out loud, questions move listeners through the sermon • Numbering and listing: least effective • Picture painting: When a controlling image is used as

	basic outline, other aspects of the image can be used • Billboards: from introduction to body, transitions tell how going to deal with the content, orient to a sermon's plan, (use caution as billboarding can make sermon too boxy and anticlimactic)
Ultimate Measures	• Use variety, "never do anything always"

Table B.8: Eugene Lowry's Homiletic Plot Method

Upset the Equilibrium *"Oops!"*	• Engage listeners in the sermon theme; preacher takes responsibility for eliciting attention in two to three minutes • Introduce ambiguity, imbalance, conflict, tension, existentially felt (so that the gospel can later be experienced) Notes • Sermon title does this, should not give resolution • Overall goal of a sermon is to resolve the central ambiguity
Analyze the Discrepancy *"Ugh!"*	• Diagnose; most time consuming, most critical because gospel introduction is dependent on it • Ask "why?" regarding central ambiguity • Keep the good half bad and the bad half good • Use concrete, perceptive insight into the multifaceted ambiguities of the human condition; elicit the response of *"I've always known that but just didn't know how to say it"* • Move from specific behavior to underlying causes • Diagnose, don't describe, takes depth in doing so • Probe behind the behavior to motives, fears, and needs in order to determine why this is so • Uncover the interior motivation where the problem is generated, expose it (not accepting a church position because of fear of failure rather than apathy is something • the gospel speaks to—one can fail and still be affirmed by God) • Move from behavior to motives; reflect on our own involvement • Keep asking why and do not be content until you have "the answer"; moves from superficial common sense answers to that which makes sense in the deepest explanatory way; listener undergoes the drama of discovery; don't tie it up neatly • Lead through dead-end routes (superficial, common sense answers) until the decisive clue is disclosed; superficial analysis to in-depth diagnosis • Develop a readiness for resolution, the Word to be proclaimed

Disclose the Clue to Resolution *"Aha!"*	Find the missing link, the bridge from problem to solution, from itch to scratch, the piece that allows all to come to focus, irresolute to self-evident
	Uncover the principle of reversal (clue comes as a surprise, turns things upside down, sudden shift)

	Four forms:
	   1. cause-effect
	   2. inverted cause
	   3. inverted assumption
	   4. inverted logic

	Notes: • Common sense leaves one in bondage and on the wrong track, have to reverse assumptions, a clue reverses underlying assumptions, *"now I see it"* (like in riddles and puzzles) • Serendipitous revelations to answers come when we are not thinking about them and our minds are free from our experienced perspective • Lay the carpet before pulling it out from under foot, lay the context • Show the radical discontinuity between the gospel and • worldly wisdom, a gospel of inversion; once the clue to resolution is articulated, hearer is ready for the gospel
Experience the Gospel *"Whee!"*	The Word is heard once the clue has made ready the context, the cure matches the disease • the gospel is continuous with human experience after human experience has been turned upside down "What consequences can now be anticipated as a result of the intersection of gospel and human predicament?"
Anticipate the Consequences *"Yeah!"*	• Effect closure Ask, "What, in the light of this intersection of human condition with the gospel, can be expected, should be done, or now is possible?" • Open a new door, different from the traditional sermon climax of asking; climax is before the ending of the sermon • Release the tension, set matters in place as a result of that resolution, the "asking"—anticipating how life can now be lived • Note: The traditional call to commitment, if it is the central focus of the sermon, puts listeners wrongly in the limelight and is a form of works righteousness

Table B.9: Eugene Lowry's Sermon Preparation Process

Explore on Sermonic Idea	The sermonic idea emerges at the intersection point between problem and solution, the human condition and the gospel, the itch and the scratch
Decide on Beginning Point	Move in thought in the opposite direction until the discrepancy is felt. This is intuitive more than conceptual, implicit rather than explicit; press into the bind and relate it to own personal experience
Engage in Diagnostic Work	• Press into more specificity by looking at the opposite in order to arrive at the intersection of where the bind is felt. • Employ the principle of reversal. • When the tension of the bind is known, the sermonic idea is born.
Set the Material in the Sermonic Plot Pattern	• See what other preparatory work is needed, analyzing the basic discrepancy.
Find the Clue to Resolution	• Link the prescription of the gospel and consequences which may be anticipated; often this happens when one is not in formal sermon preparation mode but in a serendipitous moment when conventional wisdom (acting as blinders) is not on guard. • Use different translations to broaden perspective; don't turn to the "experts" too quickly and be bound by their thought and have homiletic vision narrowed. • Avoid the ruts of experience that lock in; try changing point of view

Appendix C

Professors' and Pastors' Sermon
Preparation Process

Introduction

Preparing sermons is not for the faint of heart. D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones describes the challenge all preachers face: "The hardest part of a minister's work is the preparation of sermons. It is a trying process. There is an agony in it, an act of creation."[1] The challenge of preparing sermons, with all its agony, is a focus of "From Study to Sanctuary." It is hoped that as a result, this "act of creation" will be a less trying process for the preacher. Analyzing how others hone their craft can be a step in that direction.

Of particular interest to the present author is how other preachers, particularly those considered leaders in the field, go about week in and week out preparing their sermons. To be a fly on the wall in the study, to observe how the process works itself out, to look into the workshop of sermon construction and observe how the tools are laid out and when which ones are picked up and how they are used would be beneficial. It has been for the present author.

Appendix B examined how authors whose books were reviewed instructed regarding sermon construction. Appendix C will continue in that same vein and broaden the scope to survey twelve[2] other ways that sermons

---

[1] Iain Murray, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Fight of Faith*, book review by Russ Pulliam in *World* 31:26, 27.

[2] The biblical rationale for surveying twelve other models is that twelve unleavened cakes of bread with were placed in the temple (Lev 24); there were twelve tribes of Israel and twelve disciples.

are uniquely prepared by practitioners. Before doing so, a discussion of basic sermon elements and frameworks for the process will be examined.

Background: The "Big Rocks" of Sermon Preparation and the Big Idea

Are there certain, larger, general elements that are common to the sermon preparation process? Akin to the bare bones, "Read the text, research the material, focus on a single idea," what can serve as hooks from which to hang the other elements on? The following table illustrates the present author's literature summary on sermon preparation's broad moves.

Table C.1: Four Basic Elements of Sermon Preparation[3]

Selecting/Deciding
Investigating/Praying[3]
Writing/Refining
Practicing/Delivering

Timothy Keller, in describing his process for sermon preparation, surveyed dozens of preaching books, both old and new. He found a surprising consensus on method. At the top-level points of understanding, he details how all that he analyzed had the same basic essentials on how to preach an

---

[3] Most pastors and practitioners included prayer in the sermon preparation process, often as an overlay to the whole process. Mark Labberton underscores the importance of prayer when he comments, "George Eldon Ladd once said in class that the reason we need to pray before we read and study the Bible is not because we will fail to understand the grammar and syntax. Instead we pray because if we really hear what the text is saying, we will have so much to lose—so much dying to do, that we will distort the message in order to suit our own ways and preferences" (Mark Labberton, "More Than a Plain Reading: The Bible's Clarity Is Meant to Be Readable in the Lives of Those Who Trust It," *Christianity Today* (January–February 2017), 64-67.

expository sermon. Keller found the following four directives showing up in one form or another.[4]

Table C.2: Timothy Keller's Synthesis on Basic Elements of Sermon Preparation

Discern the text's goal	Itemize all the things the text says and look for the main idea that all the other ideas support.
Choose a main theme	Decide the text's central idea that speaks to your specific listeners.
Develop an outline around the theme that fits the passage	Enumerate each point and raise insights from the text itself that moves to a climax.
Flesh out each point	Employ arguments, illustrations, examples, images, other supportive Bible texts, and most importantly practical application.

One of the major emphases in the literature when looking at sermon preparation was the single idea. Paul Scott Wilson offers a helpful historical sketch of the dominant idea theory in preaching to show its validity and staying power.[5] Many speak to its legitimacy and cogency. Charles Spurgeon comments, "One nail driven home is better than twenty tacks loosely fixed to be pulled out in an hour."[6] William Brownson proselytizes:

> Let the obvious be said: It is important to have a plan…Planning is basic to effective preaching. The oft-recommended practice of hammering into one-sentence form the objective of every sermon is eminently wise. As some wag put it, "If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time."
> "Here's your sermon," said one contemporary pulpit master, as he placed a long, sleek rifle bullet in full view before his students. If the preacher has not sighted clearly in his mind's eye the target at which he is shooting and fashioned his sermon accordingly, his chances of a bull's-eye are

---

[4] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015),213-14.

[5] Paul Scott Wilson, Preaching and Homilietical Theory (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 9-24.

[6] Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 39.

remote. With merciless rigor the man in the pulpit must demand of himself again and again, "What am I doing here?" and "How do I propose to do it?"[7]

A sermon must be like an arrow," Timothy Keller explains, "streamlined and clearly driving at a single point, a single message, the theme of the passage."[8]

The single idea is not limited to the preaching world. Ken Davis, in training professionals who give presentations and speak as part of their vocation, notes how 75 percent of people leaving a speech could not articulate the point the speaker was trying to make and 50 percent of speakers could not summarize in a sentence the purpose or main idea that they were trying to communicate. He champions a focused statement to guide any speaking event.[9]

Table C.3: Phrases Used to Narrow Down to a Single Idea by a Sample of Pastors

Martin Luther	The "Heart Point" *(herzpunkt)*[10]
Haddon Robinson	The Big Idea[11]
Jay Adams	The Telos[12]

---

[7] William Brownson, "Planning a Year's Preaching Through Expository and Catechetical Preaching," *Reformed Review* 16, no 2 (1962), 9.

[8] Timothy Keller, "Ockenga Lectures on Preaching to the Heart," at the Ockenga Pastor's Forum, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, 2005, 16.

[9] Ken Davis, *The SCORRE Training* (Franklin, TN: Dynamic Communicators International, 1996).

[10] Patrick Ferry, "Martin Luther on Preaching: Promises and Problems of the Sermon as Source of Reformation History," *Concordia Theological Journal* 54, no. 4 (1990), 268.

[11] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 36.

[12] Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 22.

John Stott	The Categorical Proposition[13]
Fred Craddock	The Governing Idea[14]
Thomas Long	The Form and Function Sentence[15]
Bryan Chapell	The Fallen Condition Focus[16]
Wayne McDill	The Text Idea[17]
Timothy Keller	The Shaft[18]
Andy Stanley	The Sticky Statement, The Bottom Line[19]

Some authors give a larger framework by which to construct the sermon from a broader perspective, giving directives that describe the overall direction of sermon preparation—a "forest before the trees." Several examples are summarized below.

Table C.4: Donald Sunukjian's Large Framework[20]

Look at What God Is Saying
Look at What God Is Saying t**o Us**

---

[13] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 112.

[14] Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching*, foreword by Thomas G. Long (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 155.

[15] Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know, 1989, 2005, 2016), 86-91.

[16] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994, 2005), 48-54.

[17] Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 74.

[18] Keller, *Preaching*, 217-23.

[19] Andy Stanley, *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2006), 101-15.

[20] Donald Sunukijan, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007)

Table C.5: Alastair Begg's Foundational Questions

What?
So What?
Now What?

Table C.6: Alastair Begg's Overall Focus

1. Think empty	• Put on paper anything that comes to mind, a data dump that does not filter anything, even if it seems useless or extraneous. • Capture notes, quotes, anecdotes, thoughts—a type of free association exercise.
2. Read full	• Read and research about the thrust of the passage. • Conduct research from all sources
3. Write clear	• Hammer out issues of syntax; spot inconsistencies to ensure good flow. • Write the way you speak, write for the ear. • Write in order to provide a bridge from notes to speaking—it is difficult to go straight from notes to preaching; a pad or middle step is needed to make a smoother transition and to be more cogent.
4. Pray hot	
5. Deliver authentically	

Table C.7: Chuck Swindoll's Overall Focus

1. Observe the text.
2. Interpret the text.
3. Correlate the text.
4. Apply the text.

Table C.8: Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson's Preaching that Connects

Three-Stage	
Study	Develop a sermon skeleton
Write	Draft a sermon manuscript or an expanded outline, or a combination
Evaluate	Discern weaknesses, fill in gaps, polish, spice with artistic elements
Five-Stage	
Study the Scripture	

Develop the skeleton	
Write the introduction and conclusion	
Write the body of the sermon	
Evaluate	Edit, fill in gaps, spice with artistic elements

Table C.9: Robert Smith's Sermonic Dance Steps for Doctrinal Preaching

Step 1: "Start Low" – Identification
Step 2: "Go Slow" – Clarification
Step 3: "Rise" – Intensification
Step 4: "Strike Fire" – Application
Step 5: "Retire" – Recapitulation
Step 6: "Sit Down in a Storm" – Motivation

The following twelve profiles represent different homileticians' conceptual processes for crafting messages. While preachers who have preached for any length of time will naturally fall into a preparation pattern, whether intentional or not, this representative sample will give a pastor some ideas and a general template wherein he is not having to start from scratch and reinvent workflow as it pertains to preparing a sermon. Indeed, John Stott reminds:

> How, then, shall we prepare? This is a very subjective matter. There is no one way to prepare sermons. Every preacher has to work out his own method, which suits his temperament and situation; it is a mistake to copy others uncritically. Nevertheless, we can learn from one another. As Erasmus once rather playfully said, "If elephants can be trained to dance, lions to play, and leopards to hunt, surely preachers can be taught to preach."[21]

The examples below endeavor to help pastors learn from each other.

Table C.10: Andy Stanley's Communicating for a Change Model

Background

---

[21] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 213.

Determine the Goal	To teach people how to live a life that reflects the values, principles, and truths of the Bible
Pick a Point	What are you trying to say? "Every message should have one central idea, application, insight, or principle that serves as the glue that holds the other parts together." What is the one thing I want my audience to know? What do I want them to do about it? (dig until you find it, build everything around it, make it stick) Craft the "Sticky Statement": memorable and sticks with the listener long after the sermon
Create a Map (Relational Outline):[22] Not just points related to the topic, but leading to a specific destination; builds on relationship between speaker, audience, and God—charts interaction and interrelation	
ME (Orienting, Introduction)	The dilemma I face, tension to find common ground, personal struggle, lay out humanity, introduce self and topic to listeners, who you are and what you are about and the problem/issue/question with which you struggle, gets attention
WE (Broadening, Identification, Introduction continued)	Expand the tension to include everyone listening, aim for *"Yeah, me too,"* create a tension that your congregation is dying for you to resolve, make audience feel the tension, find common ground, how they need help with this as well, raises the need, engages listeners
GOD (Engaging, Illumination, Exposition)	Help listeners get into the text, the good news is that we are not the first people to struggle with this. Takes the common ground and applies a biblical principle, gives a solution to the need/issue/problem, exposition of text, sticky statement at beginning and end of this section, this section elaborates or leads up to sticky statement
YOU (Applying, Application)	So what, now what? One application that you can challenge everybody to embrace, to do this week, telling people what to do with what they have heard, me/family, church, unbelievers, marketplace, think of relationships and life stages
WE (Inspiring, Inspiration, Conclusion)	Rejoin the congregation, vision casting, inspiration, paint a verbal picture of what could and should be, imagine what would happen if we all embraced this one idea, come out from behind any physical barrier, get as close to the edge of the stage and dream out loud, Scriptures are not just to make our individual lives better but that we

---

[22] For more on this method, see Jeff Magruder, "What Andy Stanley Has in Common with John Broadus, Fred Craddock, and Haddon Robinson: A Rhetorical Analysis of Stanley's Message Map," *Papers Presented at the Evangelical Homelitics 2016 Annual Conference* at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Ft. Worth, TX).

	can be beacons of hope in our communities, imagine what we could do together, cast a common vision for the whole community
Postscript	
Internalize Message	Know the message so well that you can preach without notes, own it, be able to sit down with two people and tell it in an authentic and conversational way, practice out loud, rehearse the stories, introduction, conclusion
Engage Audience	Do this on an emotional level so that people will stay engaged with you, how the Bible impacts their lives, connect around a real need in their lives
Attend to Orality	Check speed, slow down around curves (transitions), Navigate through the text, add something unexpected, take the most direct route
Find Voice	Find your authentic self in speaking, what makes your speaking uniquely you, and use it
Decide Form/Flow of Message	Possibilities: 1. Opening story – question – text – application – challenge 2. Illustration – text – challenge – application – closing story 3. Introduction – tension – text – visual – application – conclusion 4. Text – question – story – text – application
Find traction	Keep listeners engaged by five questions (see next chart below): 1. What do they need to know? (information) 2. Why do they need to know it? (motivation) 3. What do they need to do? (application) 4. Why do they need to do it? (inspiration) 5. What can I do to help them remember? (reiteration) These questions guide how much exposition / information is presented as well as how much application, application trumps information, information is useful only if listeners are interested in it

Table C.11: Andy Stanley's Five Key Questions

What do they need to know? (Information)
• What is the simple idea?
• What one statement summarizes the message?
Why do they need to know it? (Motivation)

• What is the tension that you develop in the introduction?
• What is the reason they should listen, why should they care?
• What do they need to do? (Application)
• What is something specific they can do (homework!) and how can you help them do it?
Why do they need to do it? (Inspiration)
• What would it look like if everyone did this?
• How can you inspire people to act?
What can I do to help them remember? (Reiteration)
• What can I give them?
• Is there a memorable phrase or specific image that will help?

Table C.12: John Ortberg's Birthing a Sermon

I. Conception (Fun!)	*Think* in terms of series: greater depth, more absorption, immersion, balance, plan in advance, gives momentum in that it gives research more focus *Plan* in terms of four-month cycles for church year (each has a "feel") *Gather* input: Get focus group of eight to ten people, themes to address, topics, titles for sermons, questions, music, passages, creative ideas, group collaboration for built-in participation that covers your blind spots
II. Gestation (More Difficult!)	*Clarify* the Big Idea: If you are not clear on where you want the message to go, the information could manage you. *Ask*: What do I want people to understand? What do I want people to do? What do I want people to feel? *Pray*: "God, what is it that I need to be talking about? What's at stake here?" *Introduce*: Why is it urgently important that we talk about what we're going to talk about? *Research* "Bookish": Find good writers and read in depth, don't ride the information flood, sink teeth into one good commentary rather than skim seven mediocre ones, use volunteers as researchers, show them what you want, let them do it "Peoplish": What are people talking about? What questions are there? Is there a current event? Think about particular people in the congregation, have a picture, never preach to a faceless crowd. There are those who just went through a break-up, got accepted to college, lost a job, struggle with addiction, etc.

III. Delivery (Euphoria and Pain)	*Write* • Do you like research but hate to write and start writing too late? • Do you hate the research and like to write and go too fast to writing? (Wherever you fall, push yourself in the other direction.) 1. Identify and outline your structure: like a skeleton, gives shape and strength, allows for sermon to unfold in a dynamic way 2. Moves (not "points"): similar to a conversation, how to transition from one move to the next; if it is hard to write a transitional sentence, probably because making the wrong move 3. What requires "dwelling time"? If important or complex, use repetition, restatement, illustration, image, or metaphor. If complex, verbally warn: "Okay, the next five minutes are going to tough sledding, so I need you to stay with me." 4. Narrow the focus: if complex and requires dwelling time but is not the most important thing you have to say, shrink down to size. Don't spend time on secondary matters. 5. Use rich imagery 6. Weave together the ancient world and our world: bring the two together Nail the takeoff and the landing The two most important parts of any message are the beginning and ending. Most spend much more time on the introduction. Work as hard on the conclusion as the introduction; know where you are going to land the plane after you get it up there

Table C.13: Wayne McDill's Twelve Skills for Preparing Expository Sermons

Section 1:Text Analysis	
1. Diagramming the Text Structure	Charting the function and relationship of various ideas in the text
2. Noting the Text Details	Recognizing and noting the significance of details in the text
3. Asking Research Questions	Asking questions to understand the writer's meaning
Section 2: Theological Interpretation	
4. Naming the Text Idea	Naming from themes in the text the one idea that unlocks the text's meaning
5. Bridging from Text to Sermon	Constructing an interpretative bridge to bring the truth of the text to its expression in the sermon
6. Writing Sermon Divisions	Wording divisions clearly to state the teachings of the text on its subject
Section 3: Sermon Development	

7. Balancing Persuasive Elements	Planning support material for the understanding, acceptance, and response of the hearer
8. Exploring Natural Analogies	Finding natural analogies that precisely and vividly picture sermon ideas
9. Drawing Pictures, Telling Stories	Using vivid language to create word pictures of biblical and contemporary scenes and stories
Section 4: Sermon Design	
10. Touching Human Experience	Tracing from Scripture truths to the hearer's particular need for those truths
11. Aiming for a Faith Response	Planning every aspect of sermon design toward the aim of a faith response of the hearer
12. Planning the Oral Presentation	Determining the selection and arrangement of sermon materials for the most effective communication

Table C.14: Preaching Rocket's Week

Monday: Answer the questions.
Clearly articulate answers to four key questions. 1. What is my message about? (You can have a topic without having a point. What's the point of the passage?) 2. Why is it important? (You might know why it's important to you, but why is it important to your congregation, why do they need to know this? What's at stake for them?) 3. What do I want them to do? (Great sermons don't just present important information; they lead people to action. What is your clear and compelling action step? What do you want people to do as a result of listening to this message?) 4. What is the single most persuasive idea, the "Bottom Line"? (What's the point? If you can't summarize your idea for Twitter, keep working. The best ideas are short and memorable.)
Tuesday: Build the boxes.
Create a rough outline by using the three conceptual boxes. Box 1: Introduction • Build tension, find common ground • Work out why it is important, why they need to listen, there is something at stake here, there is a problem or challenge that we share and we are going to find the solution together, a story is good here for bridging "we share something in common" Box 2: Answer • Resolve the tension, meat of message, unpack Scripture • Create the bottom line/big idea and dress with illustrations and stories • Repeat the bottom line, show it as well as say it, the solution to the problem that you invite them into Box 3: Imagine • Concluding, sharing the vision • What life would look like if the bottom line became a reality • Describe what can be done to act, share a story to illustrate
Wednesday: Write a draft.
• With the four key questions answered and boxes filled in, write. • Some prefer to write detailed outline; others are manuscript writers; whatever your preference, carve out time to write the bulk of your message
Thursday: Improve the draft.
• Ernest Hemingway said, "The first draft of anything is terrible." • Revise to make first draft better. Too many times pastors preach their first drafts, and that isn't the best draft. Since you wrote the bulk of your message on Wednesday, there is a whole day to improve. Look for better stories. Search for an object lesson. Run the bottom-line through the bottom-line worksheet. Work on transitions. Connect the dots. Try a prop.
Friday: Say it out loud.
• There's incredible value in practicing your message out loud.

Saturday: Leave it alone.
• If process is followed, then it is Saturday and it's time to relax. • Leave your message alone, at least for the majority of the day. You might read it over at night before you go to sleep, but for the most of the day, let it rest and let it simmer. • Let your message work on you for a while before you stand and deliver it to the congregation.
Sunday: Preach it.
• It's amazing to preach a message that wasn't finished at the last minute. It comes across as something you've lived rather than something you've written.

Table C.15: John Piper's "Week"[23]

Friday Morning
• Read through the text with Bible software helps and translate • Write out the text on a half a sheet of paper • Engage in prayer: "God, show me what is here for my people. Show me new things." • Write with pen on legal pad, circle, draw arrows, note questions, flesh out how ideas connect • The half sheet is now "a mess" • Ask in prayer, "Lord, what am I going to do with all of this? I could talk for three hours on this, but I only have forty minutes." • Form numbered points • Sketch out how the points fit together on a second half sheet of paper
Break for Lunch
Friday Afternoon
• Sit at computer and start writing thoughts based on notes from the morning • Compose and edit as you write • Preach out loud as you write, pray, get a feeling for the sermon
Saturday Morning
• Do something enjoyable with family
Saturday Afternoon
• Work at getting from paper to head to heart
Sunday
• Take manuscript into pulpit, usually ten double-spaced, marked-up pages

---

[23] For an in-depth examination of Piper's preparation, see Sunghyun Pae, "A Study of John Piper's Sermon Preparation: A Model for Pastors Who Emphasize the Supremacy of God in Expository Preaching," DMin thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011.

Table C.16: Timothy Keller's week (two weeks before preaching)

Monday two weeks before preaching   • Outline passage   • Determine passage's meaning   • Consult commentaries for problems   • Exegete the passage   • (four hours)
Thursday before Sunday preaching   • Convert the work done from Bible study (what does the text say) into a sermon (what does this mean to me), move from a Bible study to biblical sermon   • Write first draft of sermon   • (five hours)
Saturday before preaching on Sunday   Saturday morning   • Write second draft, revise, make shorter   • (four hours)   Saturday afternoon/evening   • Write third draft, streamline the message   • (three hours)
Sunday morning   • Read through, practicing oral delivery   • (two hours)

Table C.17: Perry Noble's Five Steps (three weeks before preaching)

Background
1. Find your best time and place to prepare.
• Know yourself and what works for you; I prepare from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm every day because more alert   • Pick a place that is free from distraction   • Turn off cell phone and occasionally go to a different place to prepare, perhaps outside
Get a word from the Lord.   • Speak from the overflow of what God is doing inside. This means having consistent time with God.   • Do not use quiet time for message preparation.
Listen to other communicators/preachers.   • Listen to others to get ideas, but don't preach their content word for word.
Preparation Proper

Brain Dump Phase (from twenty pages to two pages) • Write and pray, "alone work" consisting of twenty pages of blank paper that are filled with thoughts, questions, notes • Read the text out loud and write down every thought that comes to mind • Look for themes • Narrow down the twenty pages to two-page summary as an MS Word document • Draft manuscript from two-page summary, writing notes, circling ideas, crossing out others on the typewritten paper • Develop outline
Discuss and Revise Phase Send outline to creative arts pastor, who assembles a team to read the passage and form their own impressions. This five- to eight-person person group is varied in life stage and meets for an hour on Tuesday to discuss sermon (sermon is three weeks away) as well as brainstorm about other creative elements for the service (branding, music, videos) • Note gleanings from team • Revise manuscript • Draft fresh, clean copy • Take manuscript everywhere to make more notes on
The Week of Preaching
Monday • Prepare the final outline from manuscript
Tuesday • Preach twice alone
Wednesday • Preach twice alone
Thursday • Preach once alone
Friday • Preach once alone
Saturday • Preach once • Make content changes, usually 25 to 50 percent. "For me, something just seems to click when I preach out loud. God reveals to me more and more as I do that." Also, prayer is throughout the whole process: "No matter how well I think I've prepared . . . it will completely fail if Jesus doesn't show up and make the difference."
Notes: Prepare messages two to three weeks ahead, have message concepts one year in advance.[24] This relieves your team and helps them to prepare better—

---

[24] Noble speaks of a "release to preach." He comments, "Sometimes God puts a message in me, but He won't give me a release to preach it until He is through teaching me." (Perry Noble, "How Do You Prepare a Message?" May 7, 2008, accessed February 9, 2017, https://perrynoble.com/blog/how-do-you-prepare-a-message).

they can have ideas that you never thought of and are amazing. "When we work ahead, it allows things to marinate in our minds. When we know what we are preaching on two to three weeks in advance, it will literally help us become more aware of what we are preaching—we are always thinking about it, always praying about it. We might even see something that will refer to it. Marinating on an idea helps it develop. I try my best to work ahead so that our staff can do their best job possible."

Table C.18: Ed Young Jr.'s Creative Preaching Weekly Process

Background: Know the direction and general content of message before the week begins; series are planned out a year ahead of time. Each weekend message takes twenty-five to thirty hours to prepare.	
Monday: Mind Dump with Creative Team	• Meet with creative team (three hours each meeting) to craft the message. (Ed Young Jr. gives the overall direction, discusses his research, what God is doing in his life) • Bring out dry erase board, storyboard, flesh out introduction, main points, thoughts, "a mind dump on here's where I'm going" • Creative team gives feedback and critique; feedback recorded in journal
Tuesday: Continued work with creative team	• Meet with creative team: same process as Monday. Young records insights from creative team on Dictaphone to talk through/rehearse possible sermon content—introduction, major points, application, Scripture verses • Administrative assistant takes transcription and transfers to a Word document and gives to Young and creative team
Wednesday: Continued Critique, Revising, Manuscript, Mind Mapping	• Meet with creative team: With hard copy of content possibility, more critique and revising • Write out sermon manuscript sentence by sentence, carefully making transitions. Usually this is an eight- to ten-page document. (Young takes this work and revises himself. Does not memorize but becomes familiar with content.) • Transfer to a "Mind Map"[27] or "message map"—one legal pad page with Big Idea in the middle and counter clockwise move through introduction, different colors for key words, becoming familiar with the mind map • Goal for sermon completion is Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning
Thursday: Finishing	• Finish sermon if not done by Wednesday
Friday	• Off
Saturday Morning: Final Preparations	• Go over mind map, making further revisions • Meet with creative team again to critique sermon

	preached live at the Saturday service for further revision for Sunday services
Sunday: Preach	• Three services

Young summarizes, "Do I have anything written down up there? I'll have an outline. My main points are in the Bible. Sometimes I look at them, sometimes I don't. But that's all I have to say. Because the creative team worked on it, because I've told it and spoken into the Dictaphone, and we've gone over and over and over it and because we've corrected it all and we've read the mind map—it's just in me. But I do that discipline of writing it down. Every word. Creativity emerges from order. Order is not emerged from creativity. That's again a postmodern view.

You've got to do the work, the hard work, and then as the Holy Spirit leads— because I know the message so well as the Holy Spirit leads I can chase a quick rabbit and come back as He leads."[25]

Table C.19: *Preaching Today*'s Complete Skills Guide

Step 1: Prepare Soul	Consider how to keep your soul fresh with God—week after week.
Step 2: Plan Preaching	Determine your texts, topics, and series.
Step 3: Get the Big Idea	Focus on the central idea of the text and stay focused on it.
Step 4: Organize Sermon	Structure for the most effective delivery.
Step 5: Find the Big Story	Connect Scripture's story to Christ's redemptive work.
Step 6: Illustrate Message	Find understandable, personal, lifelike illustrations that support Scripture.
Step 7: Apply Message	Give clear, grace-filled applications for transformation.
Step 8: Deliver and Evaluate	Keep growing as a preacher.

Table C.20: Daryl Dash's Ten Stages of Theocentric Sermons

Stage 1: Choose the Passage to Be Preached	• Congregational needs provide the target

---

[25] See Michael Duduit's interview with Young in *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights from Twenty Top Pastors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 278-81.

Stage 2: Study the Passage	Study on three levels • Literary Interpretation: genre, form, context, literary function, placement, authorship, flow • Grammatical Interpretation: verbs, adverbs, nouns, pronouns, grammar, word studies on crucial terms • Historical-Cultural Interpretation: author, audience, social setting, historical foreground, geography, date
Stage 3: Discover the Exegetical Idea	• As a whole, what is the text talking about?
	• What is the claim the text makes on its original audience? • How is the idea developed in the passage? • How do the parts of the passage relate to the idea? • Establish the subject and complement • What is the subject? (what the author talks about) • What is the complement? (what the author says about it) • Too broad? (Does subject fit all the parts?) • Too narrow? (Is the subject an exact description of that the text is talking about?)
Stage 4: Analyze the Exegetical Idea	• What does it mean? (explanation) • Is it true? (proof) • What difference does it make? (application)
Stage 5: Formulate the Homiletical Idea	• Homiletical Idea: The biblical truth applied to life, stated simply and memorably, in concrete and familiar words, focused on response
Stage 6: Determine the Sermon's Purpose	• What you expect to happen in your hearers as a result of your sermon, derived from the central message • Purpose may be affective (changing attitudes and actions) or cognitive (giving knowledge and insight) • Crosses the historical-cultural gap and application
Stage 7: Decide on How to Accomplish the Purpose	Three possibilities: • Deductive: an idea to be explained, a proposition to be proved, a principle to be applied • Inductive: builds a case for the sermon beginning with the introduction and presents the idea at the conclusion, builds suspense and tension, ends with the main idea or action step • Semi-inductive: a subject to be completed, induction-deduction
Stage 8: Outline the Sermon	An outline provides structure; structure provides the sermon with unity, order, and progress.

	Four advantages:
	1. Views the sermon as a whole, sense of unity 2. Clarifies the relationship between the various parts of the sermon 3. Crystallizes the order of ideas so communicated in proper sequence 4. Reveals where additional supporting material is needed The outline should be simple with few points, each point representing an idea
Stage 9: Fill in the Sermon Outline	Use supporting material to make the message clear and explain, prove, apply, or amplify the points, anticipate questions from the congregation and answer Use restatement, definition and explanation, factual information, quotations, narration, illustrations
Stage 10: Prepare the Introduction and Conclusion	Introductions: capture interest, uncover needs, introduce the message (and speaker) to the audience Conclusions: ask for a verdict, call for response, take the form of a summary (use illustration, a quotation, a question, specific directions, visualization)

Table C.21: Thomas Long's Model

I. Getting the Text in View	Select the text • Possibilities include *lectio continua* (preaching through the Bible, book by book, text by text), lectionary, local plan, preacher's choice • Reconsider where the text begins and ends • Establish a reliable text translation
II. Getting Introduced to the Text	• Read and reread the text for basic understanding • Place the text in its larger context
III. Attending to the Text	• Listen attentively to the text • Write a paraphrase • If narrative, stand in the shoes of each character • Explore the text, for details that look out of place
	• Find the center of gravity—a main thought around which all other thoughts are organized • Look for conflict, either in the text or behind it • Look for connections—what comes before and after it • View the text through many different eyes • Think of the text as someone's attempt to answer a very important question • Ask what the text is doing (commanding, singing, narrating, explaining, warning, debating, praying, reciting)

IV. Testing What Is Heard in the Text	• Explore the text's literary character, examine historically, study theologically • Consult commentaries
V. Moving Toward the Sermon	• State the claim of the text upon the hearers, including the preacher • Draft focus statement: tells what you want the sermon to *say* • Draft function statement: describes what you want the sermon to *do* • Link function and focus statements; they should be related to each other, clear, unified, simple • Choose a sermon form, starting with the focus and function statements; divide the larger tasks of the sermon into smaller components; decide the sequence in which these tasks should be done • Add supporting material Introduction: makes a promise to hearers that they want to keep, anticipates the whole sermon but connects directly to the next step Transitions/Connections: connectors provide closure for the preceding segment and assure hearers that they are tracking, indicate how the upcoming section is logically related to the previous section (and, but/yet, if . . . then) , anticipate the content of the next section of sermon, add color in guiding the listeners in what attitude they are to take in regard to the sermon Conclusion: Use images, experiences: analogy, example

Table C.22: Tony Merida's Christ-Centered Exposition

Step 1: Study the Text	

Do the Expositional Work	Seven Guiding Principles
	  1. Read the passage in an attitude of prayer
	  2. Remember that context is king
	  3. Look for the historical meaning first
	  4. Identify the passage's genre
	  5. Narrow to a Christ-centered focus
	  6. Interpret Scripture with Scripture
	  7. Look for the passage's theological themes

Do the Study Work	Four-Phase Study Habits for Developing Messages
	  1. Obvious Observations: What does the text say?
	  2. Responsible Interpretation: What does the text mean?
	  3. Redemptive Integration: How is the gospel related to the text?
	  4. Concluding Implications: How does this passage apply today?

Step 2: Unify the Redemptive Theme	
Identify the Main Point of the Text	• A past tense statement about what the text meant in its historical context
Determine the Main Point of the Sermon	• The sermon's essence, a present or future tense • application of the main point of the text stated in a single sentence
Add a Title That Reflects the Sermon's Main Point	• The final element for unifying the redemptive • theme, it reinforces the one dominant point that the listeners should know and live
Step 3: Construct an Outline	
Benefits: Discipleship and Communication	• Discipleship: aids in teaching the Bible by showing congregation how to study it on their own, teaches doctrine as it emerges from the text, transfers doctrinal truth, clarifies the sermon's main point, encourages further study, multiplication • Communication: gives guidance and pace, provides unity that serves the sermon's main point
Choose Approach	Nine Possibilities 1. Key word 2. Exegetical 3. Expositional 4. Hybrid Homily 5. Puritan 6. Question-Answer 7. Problem-Solution 8. Inductive 9. Sermonic Plot
Choose Words	• Make understandable and plain; use complete sentences or independent phrases for clarity • Make points progressive, leading to the climatic power of the gospel • Employ possibilities: reiteration, alliteration, assonance, parallelism, repetition
Step 4: Develop the Functional Elements	
Explain	• Unpack key words, phrases, context, ambiguous verses, key doctrines
Apply	Two Types 1. Specific application: requires immediate action, "behavioral" 2. Transformative application: shapes worldview and appeals to the heart through gospel-centered focus and impacts all areas of life, seeks an "impression" and not just to transmit information, "theological" (what's beneath behavior)

Illustrate	- Serves explanation and application, casts light on truth - Motivates, intensifies meaning - Read widely, keep eyes open, know how to tell a good story
Step 5: Adding an Introduction and Conclusion	
Introduction	- Incites interest while introducing the main point of the text and sermon - Includes redemptive element and expectations - Variety of ways: story, quote, problem, question, multimedia presentation
Conclusion	- Summarizes sermon and leads to response - Calls hearers to respond with integrity - Variety of ways: verbal appeal, physical relocation, written response, multiple approach, question and answer, response to Communion

Appendix D

What Makes a Sermon Effective?

The hypothesis of "From Study to Sanctuary" is that the more one plans ahead his preaching and has a process for preparing sermons, the more effective (other descriptors in the literature include powerful, successful, relevant, Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, life changing, anointed, transformational[1]) those sermons will be. Given this, the natural question to explore is what makes a sermon effective. The question is not as easy to answer as it first might seem—how does one operationally define "effective" as it relates to sermons? Many factors go into the question. Kenton Anderson summarizes well all of the variables in effect when he states,

> Listeners vary and have different things they are looking for in a preacher. A listener's theology will determine his or her sense of the sermon. Those who are committed to a high view of Scripture might expect something different than one committed to a more active view of the work of the Holy Spirit. Learning style is also a factor in considering the effectiveness of a sermon. Some listeners learn best through reflection and others prefer a more active and participatory approach. Culture will affect one's evaluation of a sermon. Where we come from, what generation we belong to, our denomination, our economic situation, and our gender all play a part in determining the kind of preaching we best respond to.[2]

An individual's makeup, the role of the Holy Spirit, whether the sermon is in the context of worship or if it is read or listened to, the

---

[1] A promotional ad for a national preaching conference promised to teach attenders "how to prepare, package, and present messages for life change," adding that "as pastors, we're called to preach not for fame or to see our numbers grow, but to see lives transformed by the incredible power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Preach the Word Conference 2015, accessed February 11, 2017, http://preachtheword.cc).

[2] Kenton Anderson, "How to Preach a Good Sermon," accessed February 11, 2017, http://www.preaching.org/how-to-preach-a-good-sermon/.

preacher's presentation skills, and spiritual maturity of the listeners are a few more factors.

The overall goal of sermons must also be studies in order to determine effectiveness. Stephen Tu examines the purpose of preaching in order to get to what makes a "good sermon good." He uses Colossians 1:28 as foundational for preaching's goal, "everyone mature in Christ." Synonymous ideas he elucidates include Christian maturity, discipleship, holistic renewal, Christlikeness, moving people in a Godward direction, growth in holiness, progressive sanctification, and having hearers conformed to the image of Christ.[3]

The Holy Spirit's role in preaching is important when examining effectiveness. Preaching includes the triad of the Holy Spirit with the preacher and the people at a particular time. Some sermons, the same ones, will "bomb" in one place and "burn" in another. Evangelists in the Great Awakening were said to have preached the same sermon in different towns with different responses. This appendix will explore these areas, as well as the Holy Spirit's function, in seeking to discover what makes sermons effective.

Sermon Effectiveness: Perspectives

Many express viewpoints on what makes sermons effective. Frederick Wright makes the observation that preaching must have a point in order to

---

[3] Stephen Tu, "What Makes a Good Sermon Good?", in *Papers Presented to the Evangelical Homiletics Society 2011 Annual Conference*, 126.

be effective.[4] Jay Adams laments, "There is so much purposeless preaching today in which the preacher has only the vaguest idea of what he wants to achieve . . . [this] has spawned a brood of preachers who are lifeless, abstract, and impersonal; it has obscured truth and hindered joyous Christian living." [5]J. I. Packer weighs in on preaching's purpose that informs effectiveness by stating, "The purpose of preaching is to inform, persuade, and call forth an appropriate response to the God whose message and instruction are being delivered."[6] Phillip Ryken offers,

> Good preaching always applies the Bible to daily life. It tells us what promises to believe, what sins to avoid, what divine attributes to praise, what virtues to cultivate, what goals to pursue, and what good works to perform. There is always something God wants us to do in response to the preaching of his Word. We are called to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only." And if we are not doers, then we were not hearers, and the sermon was wasted on us.[7]

Matt Woodley, editor of *Preaching Today*, summarizes effective sermons by the borrowed phrase "beautiful orthodoxy." He explains:

> After studying the art and craft of preaching for over 25 years, at PreachingToday.com we've developed our short list of sermonic excellence, but we could summarize our list with a phrase adopted by *Christianity Today's* editor Mark Galli. He calls it "Beautiful Orthodoxy." . . .

---

[4] Frederick Wright, "Effective Preaching: Past and Present in the Episcopal Church," DMin thesis-project, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, 2000, 15.

[5] Jay Adams*, Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 69.

[6] J. I. Packer, *The Preacher and Preaching*, edited by Samuel Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 9.

[7] Phillip Ryken, "How to Listen to a Sermon," Reformation 21, February 2012, accessed February 11, 2017, http://www.reformation21.org/articles/how-to-listen-to-a-sermon.php.

Orthodox sermons have been submitted to a specific biblical text and to the larger story of God's redemption of the world in Christ. *Beautiful* sermons accurately state and then develop the big idea of a Bible passage or theme with clarity, simplicity, and liveliness. In the power of the Spirit, sermons should move people to delight in, rely upon, and receive the good news of the God who is with us and for us in Jesus Christ.[8]

Tu analyzes what makes a sermon effective by stating, "A sermon is good insofar as it is aesthetically good as a literary work (in its content, design, and language) and does what it is supposed to do as a sermon—namely, help hearers pursue holiness."[9] Timothy Keller in *Preaching* makes distinctions among bad, good, and great sermons. He believes that the preacher can largely control the needle between what is a bad sermon and a good sermon. However, the Holy Spirit must be present to move a sermon from the good to the great category. He explains:

> The difference between a bad sermon and a good sermon is largely located in the preacher—in their gifts and skills and in their preparation for any particular message. Understanding the biblical text, distilling a clear outline and theme, developing a persuasive argument, enriching it with poignant illustrations and metaphors, and practical examples, incisively analyzing heart motives and cultural assumptions, making specific application to real life—all of this takes extensive labor. To prepare a sermon like this requires hours of work, and to be able to craft and present it skillfully takes years of practice.
> However…the difference between good and great preaching lies

---

[8] Matthew Woodley, "The Beauty of Preaching," Preaching Today, accessed February 11, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2015/july/beauty-of-preaching.html.

[9] Tu, "What Makes a Good Sermon Good?", 131. Tu develops a helpful sermon evaluation heuristic based on this statement at the end of his paper and evaluates Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" based on his definition of effective sermons.

mainly in the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the listener as well as the preacher.[10]

Keller references Acts 16 here and how Lydia responded to the message in a way that was qualitatively different from that of the other woman as the Lord "opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." It is interesting to note here that while Pentecost occurs in Acts 2, in Acts 16 "the Lord" is the primary agent who gave Lydia understanding and motivation to respond.

Those who are not pastors or preaching professors, when asked what makes a sermon effective, answer in various ways as well:

> The gospel is the heart of effective preaching. The sermon needs to function as good news and then how is the good news embodied in the body in the community in their time and place that are relevant to their daily living. The preacher must be emotionally present, authentic, real— genuine with no artifice.[11]
>
> Effective sermons have specific illustrations that are clear and memorable that one can hang the meat of the sermon on and apply to everyone. . . . Powerful sermons stay with you.[12]

Indeed, no pastor wants to preach ineffective sermons.[13] John Stott echoes this basic assertion: "Every preacher desires to be effective. He hopes

---

[10] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 11.

[11] Bryan Bibb, associate professor of Old Testament at Furman University, personal interview with the researcher, August 28, 2016.

[12] Terry Bruner related that he remembered a Tim Keller sermon from almost seven years ago on the Trinity. He recounted, "In the sermon 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,' I realized that the Godhead exists in relationship and how love was God's essential nature and it exists in relationships" (accessed February 11, 2017, http://www.gospelinlife.com/father-son-and-holy-spirit-5445). Terry Bruner, personal interview with the researcher, September 13, 2016.

[13] Contra Tony Morgan's "6 Ways to Make a Sermon Ineffective," accessed April 22, 2017, https://theunstuckgroup.com/2017/04/preaching-crafting-effective-sermons/.

the people will listen to his sermons, understand them, and respond to them in faith and obedience."[14] This is not a new phenomenon, as a quick walk through lecture series and preaching book titles from the last century[15] shows a desire, whatever the adjective in front of preaching happens to be, for sermons to be effective1[16]—or the opposite of "bad." A basic question naturally surfaces: What then constitutes effective preaching?[17] A general definition of effectiveness is "successful in producing a desired or intended result."1[18]

Another question when trying to lay a foundation for effective preaching stems from the definition of what is the intended result of preaching. Is it what the congregation takes away—even when post-sermon evaluations show that what they understood to be the big idea at times

---

[14] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 328.

[15] From the "Effective Preaching" lectures at Boston University (G. Bromley Oxham, ed., *Effective Preaching: A Series of Lectures Delivered Before the Boston University's School of Theology October 15-17, 1928* [New York: Abingdon, 1929]), to Thomas Liske, *Effective Preaching* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), to Don Aycock, *Preaching with Power and Purpose: The E. Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), the interest on what constitutes effective preaching in the academy and in the church is consistent.

[16] The keyword search "effective preaching" on Amazon.com in the first three pages alone yielded thirty- one titles with "Preaching" and "Effective" coupled in either the title or subtitle.

[17] This question has sought to be answered in such avenues as papers presented to the Evangelical Homiletics Society (see Tu, "What Makes a Good Sermon Good?") to DMin thesis-projects (see Jack Devries, "Preaching for Success: The Results a Preacher Can Realistically Expect Through the Faithful Preaching of God's Word," Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2003; Wright, "Effective Preachers Past and Present").

[18] *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, ed. Angus Stevenson and Christine Lindberg, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

differed from person to person? Can effective sermons be boiled down to descriptors such as "biblical,[19] clear, and applies to life?" At a more basic level, what is the purpose of preaching—the goal? There are different answers to this question. Wayne McDill sees preaching's goal as enhancing faith in hearers.[20] Haddon Robinson stresses application to hearers: "Effective sermons major in biblical ideas brought together into an overarching unity. Having thought God's thoughts after him, the expositor communicates and applies those thoughts to the hearers. In dependence on the Holy Spirit, the preacher aims to confront, convict, convert, and comfort men and women through proclamation of biblical concepts."[21]

When answering his question of why preach, Scott Gibson answers, "for the growth of men and women and boys and girls in the faith. We want to stretch believers to expand their faith and obedience as they grow in grace. Our goal is Christlikeness."[22] J. Kent Edwards offers that the purpose of a sermon is "to communicate and apply the primary idea intended by the

---

[19] J. Kent Edwards advocates for the basic essentiality of a sermon being biblical to be effective when he asks, "Are we going to subject the Scriptures to our thought, or do we subject our thought to the Scriptures? Who's the boss here? Does the Bible determine what I say or do I determine what I say?" J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go Beyond the Superficial* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 17.

[20] Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 189.

[21] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1980, 2001), 39.

[21] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1980, 2001), 39.

[22] Scott M. Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 13.

original author of a unit of Scripture . . . to say what God said. . . . We are only successful when God's voice is passed on to God's people without any distortion of any kind."[23]

Greg Scharf outlines eight bottlenecks that need to be removed for sermons to be effective. They include a preacher's unbelief, an unqualified (not called) preacher, faulty text selection, inadequate understanding of the text, inadequate contextualization, faulty organization, inadequate balance of proposition and illustration, and flawed delivery.[24]

A. W. Tozer offers, "To be effective a preacher's message must be alive; it must alarm, arouse, challenge; it must be God's present voice to a particular people."[25] Tony Merida views that a successful sermon is not one that simply transfers information but rather fosters adoration—making the truth not only clear but also real. He cites Lloyd-Jones in offering,

> The first and primary object of preaching is not only to give information. It is, as Edwards says, to produce *an impression.* It is the impression at the time that matters, even more than what you can remember subsequently. . . . Preaching is not primarily to impart information; and while you are writing your notes you may be missing something important of the impact of the Spirit . . . tell people to read certain books themselves to get the information there. The business of preaching is to make such knowledge live.[26]

---

[23] J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 20.

[24] 24Greg R. Scharf, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Strategies for Overcoming Bottlenecks in Preaching God's Word* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015

[25] Nelson Searcy, "A. W. Tozer on Effective Preaching," Church Leader Insights, November 17, 2016, accessed February 11, 2017, https://churchleaderinsights.com/w-tozer-effective-preaching/.

[26] Tony Merida, *The Christ-Centered Expositor: A Field Guide for Word-Driven Disciple Makers*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 188. This "impression and not information" angle surprised me as Reformed emphasis on the life of the mind and an educated clergy would seem to trend to the more rationalistic

Some would connect a sermon's effectiveness based on its form—

expository,[27] topical,[28] or verse-by-verse.[29] Others would stress theological

content, such as "Christ-centered"[30] or "gospel centered"[31]—the phrases are

often used interchangeably. Some focus on preaching skills;[32] others mention

---

and cognitive information perspective. Another question is what is meant by an "impression" and how does it move the hearer to maturity?

[27] Examples here would be John MacArthur, Albert Mohler, and Mark Dever. Mohler writes that "expository preaching is central, irreducible, and nonnegotiable to the Bible's mission of authentic worship that pleases God" ("Expository Preaching—Antidote to Anemic Worship," almohler.com, August 19, 2013, accessed February 11, 2017, http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/08/19/expository-preaching-the-antidote-to-anemic- worship/). Expositional preaching leads Mark Dever's list as the first mark of a healthy church: "A commitment to expositional preaching is a commitment to hear God's Word" (*9 Marks of a Healthy Churc*h [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013], 11).

[28] Rick Warren, Andy Stanley, and Bill Hybels have made topical preaching and honing in on listeners' "felt needs" a driving force in preaching content and delivery.

[29] 29 Ronald Allen, *Preaching Verse by Verse* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

[30] See, for example, Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994, 2005); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*: *The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), especially chapter 1, "Nothing But Christ and Him Crucified," chapter 9, "Can I Preach a Christian Sermon without Mentioning Jesus," and the introduction to Section II, "Christ in All the Scriptures." Keller also emphasizes this perspective in *Preaching*, especially chapter 3, "Preaching Christ from All of Scripture."

[31] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 77-79, has a section in chapter 6, "The Work of Gospel Renewal," that lists five characteristics of preaching for gospel renewal: 1) Preach to distinguish between religion and the gospel. 2) Preach both to the holiness and the love of God to convey the richness of grace. 3) Preach not only to make the truth clear but also to make it real. 4) Preach Christ from every text. 5) Preach to Christians and non-Christians at once.

[32] McDill catalogues twelve skills in *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*.

results that are descriptive of book titles.[33] These books aim for such goals as "making a difference," "connecting," and promoting "change."

In defining what makes a sermon effective, one must consider that it is a slippery concept—for what is a good sermon to one person is not to another. Keller reflects on his preaching from his first pastorate by noting: "Not long after I began my preaching ministry I noticed a puzzling inconsistency in the response of my listeners. Sometimes I would get gratifying feedback in the week after a particular sermon. 'That sermon changed my life.'. . . It wasn't long before I realized that others would be saying— about the same message—something like 'meh.'"[34]

To frame the enigma with a real example from my present church, meet the Thompsons, mother Kim and daughter Anna, to see how they perceive the sermon as either "awesome" or "awful" depending on their perspective. Anna is home from college for fall break and goes to church with her parents. As the author visits with the family later that Sunday evening, Kim effuses about the sermon that morning, using words like "incredible" and "moving." Within earshot of the conversation, twenty year-old Anna's face contorts to perplexity, and in an incredulous tone of voice she asks, "Really? I had no idea what he was talking about. I could barely keep my eyes open!"

---

[33] For example, Scott M. Gibson, ed., *Making a Difference in Preaching: Haddon Robinson on Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999); Mark Galli and Craig Larsen, *Preaching That Connects: Using Journalistic Techniques to Add Impact* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); and Andy Stanley, *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2006).

[34] Keller, *Preaching,* 9.

Their different reactions to the same preacher remind me of the biblical account that was referenced earlier where Lydia's response is described in Acts 16:14 as "the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." In Acts 20:9, Eutychus's response to Paul's message was one of falling out of a window due to sleep. Even a cursory look at people's reaction to the same sermon does not yield predictable answers. Ken Swetland in considering the question asks, "What is going on in the life and mind of the hearer, how is the message communicated in the preacher's voice, and what is the work of the Holy Spirit?"3[35]

Lydia's response, described by the phrase "the Lord opened her heart," introduces another theological element to the discussion: What is the hearer's role and responsibility in receiving the message? Can one conclude that unless there is some prior agency helping the hearer, then there is ambiguity in response? Did the Lord not open Eutychus's heart—or at least keep his eyes open?

The challenge to define effective preaching makes evaluation difficult. A host of questions surround the task: How does one measure effectiveness and do it empirically? What are the core elements that are critical in order for a sermon to be considered effective? What is the role of the preacher, the listener, the Holy Spirit?

Gibson and Willhite put the responsibility more on the shoulders of the preacher. They ask,

What separates potent preaching from that which is feeble? . . . Each pastor enters the pulpit on a level playing field. Each has the same powerful

---

[35] Ken Swetland, personal interview with the researcher, August 12, 2005.

and effective Word of God and the same Holy Spirit who can make that Word accomplish its intended purpose. Given that equality, one has to ask why some preachers seem to be able to appeal to a very large audience while others seem to struggle. Since the variable is not the Word that is preached, then the answer must lie in some way or another with the preacher who preaches the Word.[36]

Jacob De Vries offers, "The effective power of God's Word is affected by three variables: The sovereignty of God, listener response, and the message preached. While the preacher cannot control either the sovereignty of God or listener response, he is able to remove the obstacles to the faithful and effective preaching of God's Word."[37] De Vries sees Christlikeness as the goal of preaching: "Individuals change and grow as the Word does it work…The aim of preaching is to proclaim the redeeming work of God through his Son to the end that Christlikeness takes place—in individuals and in the community of faith."[38]

Aristotle has in his sights the communicator's responsibility. Alexander the Great's tutor writes, "Things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly."[39] However,

---

[36] 36 Scott M. Gibson and Keith Wilhite, eds., *The Big Idea Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 122.

[37] De Vries, "Preaching for Success," 3.

[38] De Vries, "Preaching for Success," 3.

[39] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 88.

the parable of the sower in Mark 4 seems to negate the sower or preacher of the Word and focuses on the soil of the receiver. Interestingly, the messenger and message are the same but with different results; listener receptivity is key.

Many advocate for sermons to be memorable and therefore "sticky" to be effective. This can be seen in the query, "What did the preacher talk about in his sermon today?" Recall at some level is a basic expectation. Preaching Rocket describes "Five Ways to Create Memorable Sermons," where how to craft a "sticky statement" is described.[40] Chip Heath and Dan Heath popularized stickiness as a valuable communication tool by explaining how oral communication needs to be simple, concrete, emotional, have credibility, employ story, and be unexpected.[41]

Is effectiveness a sermon's "stickiness"? How does one measure on the "take home" level? There are things that a coach does in practice that are considered anchors of good coaching, but his players have to go out and execute and win games for it to be considered effective. Can a preacher follow solid exegetical and homiletical method and regardless of listener response (or perceived response) have an effective sermon?

R. Clifford Jones offers that response is vital for sermon effectiveness. He explains,

> Ultimately, a sermon that has not had a positive effect on listeners has failed. After all, the goal of the preacher is not to impress hearers with his or her

---

[40] "5 Ways to Create Memorable Sermons," The Rocket Company, June 23, 2015, accessed February 14, 2017, https://therocketcompany.com/5-ways-to-create-memorable-sermons/.

[41] Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* (New York: Random House, 2007), 54-56.

facility in the original languages of Scripture, or his or her competency as an expositor. Nor is the preacher out to prove that he or she is a skilled pulpiteer. What preachers want is to communicate the word of God in such a way that lives are changed and enriched.[42]

Sermon effectiveness for Jones and many others is contingent on whether people understand the sermon and then apply it to their everyday lives. How does one know if it is being applied? How can one screen from the extremes of a sermon being toxic to it being fluff to determine effectiveness? Are there written-in-stone, agreed-upon commandments that a sermon must have in order to be considered good? Christopher Sherwood notes that the general consensus based on his research is that the goal of preaching is threefold: 1.To communicate the reality of the truths of the gospel in a clear and inspiring manner; 2. To inspire the congregation to love and seek God and thereby to be transformed into his image; 3. To live out faith as a testimony to the world.[43]

Lori Carrell's research showed that from a listener standpoint, the top attributes of effective sermons were that they were clear, interesting, and practical.[44] Indeed, the author's contention here is that these three characteristics are not different from good oral communication for a speech that is given at the Rotary Club—they are not distinctive of gospel heralding.

---

[42] R. Clifford Jones, "Evaluating the Sermon: Ten Elements to Consider After You Preach," March 1, 2005, accessed February 14, 2017, http://beta.preaching.com/resources/articles/11550650/.

[43] Christopher Sherwood, "Compelled to Listen: A Comparative Analysis of the Rhetorical Elements in the Sermons of Tony Evans, Rick Warren, and Bill Hybels," DMin thesis-project, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, 2005, 23.

[44] Lori Carrell, *The Great American Sermon Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Mainstay Church Resources, 2000), 209-30.

Sherwood comments, "The goal of the sermon, in some sense, is the same as any publicly spoken message: to trigger a response. But for the preacher, this aim is the central focus of his call. It carries a responsibility that has eternal consequences."[45]

As can be expected, thoughts on what can be called effective preaching vary according to the person asked. A main question then becomes whether a sermon has certain core elements that transcend context, a preacher's personality, a diverse congregation with different perspectives, experiences, and certain learning styles. Do certain themes emerge when taken as a whole? Jeffrey Arthurs sees effective preaching as proclamation that converts, edifies, and is biblical.

> Preaching converts in that is draws people to Christ. It edifies when it produces life change in the hearer's life—there is a move toward godliness where the person is being conformed more and more into the image of Christ. Proclamation is faithful to the biblical text. This necessitates a correct view of inspiration. There is power in God's Word. God's Word will not return void and preaching's goal is to make plain the power of God's Word and not simply oratory.[46]

Ken Swetland asks questions about what effective preaching accomplishes: What is the passage saying? What is God asking me? How does it apply? What does it mean to me?[47] Scott Gibson cites Matthew 28:16-20 as the basis for seeing that preaching's goal is to make disciples.[48] Andy Stanley

---

[45] Sherwood, "Compelled to Listen," 46.

[46] Jeffrey Arthurs, personal Interview with the researcher, August, 13, 2015.

[47] Swetland, personal interview, August 14, 2015.

[48] Gibson, Doctor of Ministry preaching residency, February 1, 2011, Charlotte, North Carolina.

reminds that effective preaching is about transformation and not information.[49]

The challenge with the research design is that transformation (or however one phrases it—sanctification, growth in grace, spiritual growth, discipleship, etc.) is hard to measure over a relatively short time where a sermon or sermon series is the primary agency. Transformation is a process that takes place over the period of a lifetime as the gospel narrative takes root in a person's life. A longitudinal study would be needed to best measure the life change that many cite as a key to effective preaching.

F. Dean Lueking points to the end goal of Christ-likeness: "Individuals change and grow as the Word does its work. . . . The aim of preaching is to proclaim the redeeming work of God through his Son to the end that growth in Christlikeness takes place in individuals and in the community of the faithful."[50] Harry Emerson Fosdick sees preaching's task as bridge building where Christ influences an individual:

"A good sermon is an engineering operation by which a chasm is bridged so that the spiritual goods on one side—the 'unsearchable riches of Christ'—are actually transported into the personal lives upon the other."[51]An overall question of how to know when Christlikeness or the unsearchable riches of Christ are being formed in listeners and how to measure this (and is sanctification measurable?) is an important one to this end goal of preaching.

---

[49] Stanley, *Communicating for a Change*, 112.

[50] F. Dean Lueking, *Preaching: The Art of Connecting God and People* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 71.

[51] Richard Lischer, *Company of Pastors: Wisdom in Preaching, Augustine to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 98.

There is a sense that sermons, even with all the technicalities and architecture of what makes (or should make) them good, have to have an effect on hearers in order to be effective. As my high school basketball coach used to preach, a good pass on a fast break, no matter how deftly delivered, is not a good pass unless it is caught by the teammate.

Effectiveness: The Holy Spirit

Does simply following the wisdom of planning preaching many months ahead and methodically working through steps to sermon construction birth an effective sermon? Is preaching a linear "if a and b, then c will result"? A general theme in the literature is that the Holy Spirit must be present for there to be effective preaching.[52] Though some argue "Spirit-led preaching" [53]is not a biblical concept, and others describe how the Holy Spirit can be "quenched,"[54] no one denies the Holy Spirit's operative agency in preaching

---

[52] See papers such as Richard Bargas, "The Holy Spirit in the Pulpit: Attempting to Define Divine Unction," *The Evangelical Homiletics Society's 2013 Annual Conference*, 1-13; Zack Erswine, "Finding the Unction in a Digital Landscape: Preaching, the Holy Spirit, and Emerging Technology," *The Evangelical Homiletics Society's 2003 Annual Conference*, 87-98; Greg Heisler, "Clark Kent or Superman? A Case for Spirit-Driven Methodology of Expository Preaching," *The Evangelical Homiletics Society's 2011 Annual Conference*, 82-91; Jake Roudkovski, "The Holy Spirit in Preaching," *The Evangelical Homiletic Society's 2015 Annual Conference*, 43-51

[53] Stephen Tu contends that the only use of "Spirit-led" in the New Testament is in conjunction with sanctification and mortification of sin; see "Spirit-led Preaching, or What's Wrong with North American Homiletics," *The Evangelical Homiletics Society 2010 Annual Conference*, 132-38.

[54] See Albert Martin, *Preaching in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), chap. 4, "Restrained or Diminished Measure of the Spirit in Preaching," 40-64.

and receiving the Word. Stephen Olford quips, "Only the Holy Spirit can transform a manuscript into a message."[55]

One does not have to read reams of research to conclude this. On the preparation front, J. Kent Edwards states, "The secret of 'deep preaching' is the Holy Spirit. Those preachers who allow the Holy Spirit to be their teachers are able to plumb to the depths of the ocean of God's Word and enter into a wonderfully richer understanding of Scripture."[56] In a good summary on a preacher's reliance on the Holy Spirit, John Stott teaches:

> Only Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit can open blind eyes and deaf ears, make the lame walk and the dumb speak, prick the conscience, enlighten the mind, fire the heart, move the will, give life to the dead and rescue slaves from Satanic bondage. Therefore, our greatest need as preachers is to be "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) so that, like the apostles, we may "preach the gospel by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven" (I Peter 1:12), and the gospel may come to people through our preaching "not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction."[57]

D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones's final chapter, "Demonstration of the Spirit and of the Power," describes how the Holy Spirit's empowerment is a must for effective preaching and that the unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit is preaching's great essential.[58] He concludes *Preaching and Preachers* with the plea,

> Let [the Holy Spirit] loose you, let Him manifest His power in you and through you…Nothing but a return of this power of the Spirit on our preaching is going to avail us anything…nothing can substitute for this…This "unction," this "anointing," is the supreme thing. Seek it until you

---

[55] Stephen Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007), 153.

[56] Edwards, *Deep Preaching*, 23.

[57] Stott, *Between Two World*s, 328.

[58] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), 321.

have it; be content with nothing less. Go on until you can say, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words or man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."[59]

Bryan Chapell gives the Holy Spirit favored status when he states:

No amount of homiletical skills will for substitute for the Spirit's work. The ultimate measure of a sermon's success is…whether it communicated transforming truths. Sermons succeed only when the Holy Spirit works beyond human craft to perform his purposes. Only the most arrogant servant, however, will impose the master's goodness for shoddy work. We serve best when we not only depend on the Holy Spirit to empower our words but also craft them to honor him.[60]

Effectiveness: Evaluation Forms and Articles

Sermon evaluation forms used in seminary preaching courses and denomination ordination exams should be helpful in answering questions of preaching effectiveness–what they measure and by what standards a preacher is evaluated on should give a good indication of what is therefore considered good preaching. As an example, Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary's Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching has recently solicited help to determine today's effective preachers.[61] They list seven categories that they see as criteria for effective preaching: Biblical/Exegetical,[62] Relevance,[63] Person of the Preacher,[64]

---

[59] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 341.

[60] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 265.

[61] 62 The Evangelical Homiletic Society's Scott Gibson sent an email to EHS members on February 7, 2017, soliciting help for the Baylor survey.

[62] The effective preacher's sermons are the result of careful exegetical study of selected biblical texts, revealing an awareness of their grammatical/syntactical, historical, cultural, literary, and theological dimensions and ever attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

[63] The effective preacher's sermons demonstrate a proper hermeneutic which bridges the gap between the meaning of the text in its historical context and its

Theological/Orthodox,[65] Sermon Form,[66] Effective Communication,[67]and

Delivery.[68] The present author reviewed forty sermon evaluation forms and

oral presentation rubrics from various seminaries, divinity schools,

denominational accrediting agencies, and individual churches. The same

general themes as the Baylor survey were present with not much significant

divergence from these broad categories.

A summary therefore from Baylor's survey (and that captures the

essence of sermon evaluation forms) is that effective sermons are biblically

based and theologically oriented as a result of careful exegetical study aided

by the Holy Spirit that finds expression in application to everyday life. The

effective sermon is delivered authentically, skillfully, and with integrity in an

engaging form that aids listener receptivity. It impacts listeners lives that

results in action that reflects the gospel.

---

meaning for the contemporary context of the hearer resulting in the application of
its meaning to everyday life.

[64] The effective preacher's life and ministry demonstrate such authenticity,
integrity, and commitment to the Christian faith that the sermon is never
questioned or compromised by the character of the preacher.

[65] The effective preacher's sermons proclaim the great truths of the Christian
faith in keeping with the great Christian theological and ethical tradition.

[66] The effective preacher's sermons employ a form/structure/shape that
allows the meaning of the texts to be exposed in an understandable manner so that
the hearer is engaged from beginning to end.

[67] The effective preacher's sermons clearly communicate the central truth(s)
of the biblical text by the use of accessible language and effective images and
illustration so as to have an affective impact on the lives of the hearers and an
awareness of the presence and power of God.

[68] The effective preacher's sermons are delivered skillfully employing a style
authentic to the preacher and appropriate to the hearers. The style and delivery
never supersede or hinder the content of the sermon but enables hearers to better
hear and understand it.

Some representative summaries of what constitutes good sermons are set out in tables below. Themes from the upcoming Baylor survey are readily seen.

Table D.1: *Story* Magazine's Seven Marks of a Good Sermon[69]

1. Engages the Biblical Text	The sermon is a response to the Scriptures read, takes seriously the nature of the Bible as God's Word that provokes a response
2. Connects God's Word to the Lives of people	Preaching is an incarnational word that reaffirms God's commitment to meet us where we are; there is no universal gospel apart from the way it manifests itself in the particular and concrete aspects of actual lives
3. Organized and Easy to Understand	Clearly thought out and presented, easily followed, well-organized
4. Engages the Imagination	The gospel is more than just cognitive but experiential as well – preaching speaks to the whole person
5. Delivered with Skill	To preach is to communicate so effective delivery is a must. The appropriate affect and delivered with passion are essential as well.
6. Orients to Life in God's World	Directs to world where Christian callings to be God's people and partners in the world, guards against an inwardly, self-focused version of Christianity
7. Proclaims the Gospel	The preacher's primary task in dealing with any biblical passage is to speak of what God has done and is still doing through Jesus for us and the world

Table D.2: Duane Kederman's Three Clusters of a Good Sermon[70]

1. Communicational Excellence	Is easy to follow, the main point is clear, well organized, language is not over the head, images and stories are used that move

---

[69] Michael Rogness and David Lose, "Seven Marks of a Good Sermon," accessed February 14, 2017, http://www.luthersem.edu/story/default.aspx?article _id=39.

[70] Duane Kederman, "What Makes a Sermon a Good Sermon?", Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed February 14, 2017, https://www.ccel.org/node/13464.

2. Biblical Faithfulness	Rooted in the Bible; authority is in the fact that it is from the Word of God and not the preacher's opinion; preaching is first and foremost a proclamation of Scripture
3. Transformational Power	Changes and challenges to deeper obedience, stretches people and brings them closer to God, deepens faith, makes a better, more loving, kingdom citizen, calls hearers to the cross and invites them to new life in Christ. "Spiritual transformation of course is not just the work of preachers and worshippers. Preaching does not change people. God changes people through preaching. Preachers and worshippers must approach the sermon filled with awe, humility, and expectancy that the Holy Spirit will do a great work through the sermon. This involves intense prayer and spiritual preparation on the part of preacher and worshipper without which transformational power is sure to elude everyone."

Table D.3: Kevin DeYoung's Four Qualities of Good Preaching[71]

1.Veracity	Christian preaching must first be true—true to the text, true to the whole counsel of God
2. Clarity	Understandable, paying attention to structure, flow, pace, and length of sermons
3. Authenticity	The preacher's unique personality comes through, comfortable in own skin, connection with the congregation; is there personal passionate pleading in preaching?
4. Authority	Good preaching sounds forth with certainty because God speaks through the preacher, making claims on people's lives

Table D.4: Kenton Anderson's How to Preach a Good Sermon[72]

A good sermon is rooted in the Bible	The Bible will govern the sermon and be the source of its big idea if the sermon is any good. Good preachers understand that God still speaks through his Word. The Bible is the one instrument that God has promised to bless. When it comes to good preaching, the Bible is where the power is.

---

[71] Kevin DeYoung, "The Four Indispensable Qualities of Good Preaching," The Gospel Coalition, February 9, 2011, accessed February 14, 2017, https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2011/02/09/the-four-indispensable-qualities-of-good-preaching/.

[72] Kenton C. Anderson, "How to Preach a Good Sermon," Preaching, March 4, 2011, accessed February 14, 2017, http://www.preaching.org/how-to-preach-a-good-sermon/.

A good sermon helps people hear from God	If it helps people hear what God is saying, it is a good sermon, regardless of the preacher's style.
A good sermon will be easily understood	Simple truths are the most profound. Listeners can understand good preaching. Good preachers work to understand the language, the culture, and the interests of those to whom they preach. They work hard to clarify and unify the presentation so that there will be no confusion about what they are trying to say. In most cases, good sermons offer one idea—an idea big enough yet simple enough for listeners to appreciate and apply to their lives.

Table D.5: Timothy Keller's Good Sermon Description[73]

Serving the Word	
Proclaims the testimony of God (1 Cor. 2:1)	Preach biblically, engage the authoritative text, making clear the meaning of the text in its context; preaching is not one's opinion
Draws out the passage's message	Exposition—focuses with insight and faithfulness a view of the Bible's overarching message
Serving the People	
Engages Culture	Application—proclaims to "both Jews and Greeks," compelling, touches hearts to repent and to action
Preaches Christ	"Unless we preach Christ . . . people will never truly understand, love, and obey the Word of God."

Table D.6: Jared Wilson's Good Preaching[74]

Preaching Definition: Proclamation that exults in the exposing of God's glory	
Good preaching is about content: Scripture's words	What is the message about?
Good preaching is about posture: Scripture's sense	How is the message about it?

---

[73] Keller, *Preaching*, 20-22.

[74] Jared C. Wilson, "What Is Good Preaching, Anyway?", The Gospel Coalition, March 4, 2015, accessed February 14, 2017, https://blogs. thegospelcoalition.org/gospeldrivenchurch/2015/03/04/what-is-preaching-anyway/.

Table D.7: Jason Allen's Four Marks of Faithful Preaching (2 Tim 4:1-5)[75]

Preach Biblically	"Preach the Word"—the primacy of Scripture
Preach Authoritatively	"Preach . . . be ready in season and out of season"—herald, proclaim; preaching is an authoritative act
Preach Pastorally	"Reprove, rebuke, exhort . . . with great patience and instruction"—preach with boldness but from a shepherd's heart with affection for the people
Preach Persistently	"Be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist . . . fulfill[ing] your ministry"—preaching is not for a paycheck; it is who you are

Effectiveness: Communication Skills

How does the preacher as communicator speak in such a way that delivery and rhetorical devices are used with skill and impact?[76] Ian Paul notes that when people describe what they believe to be good sermons, there is rarely any mention of delivery but rather comments focus on content. However, when people describe what they determine as poor sermons, comments focus almost exclusively on delivery issues. Content and delivery function in quite different ways in relation to preaching.[77] While secondary, learning and the wise use of elements like persuasion can be a common grace help to make sermons (as acts of speech) more effective because they are received/heard easier.

---

[75] Jason K. Allen, "4 Marks of Faithful Preaching," For the Church, April 22, 2015, accessed February 14, 2017, http://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/4-marks-of-faithful-preaching.

[76] For a helpful discussion, see Christophe Sherwood's, "Compelled to Listen," 116.

[77] Ian Paul, "What Makes a Good Sermon?", Psephizo, January 23, 2015, accessed February 14, 2017, http://www.psephizo.com/preaching-2/what-makes-a-good-sermon/.

This is not a postmodern reality to take into consideration. Blaise Pascal nearly four hundred years ago commented on its importance: "So the art of persuasion consists as much in pleasing as it does in convincing, humanity being so much more governed by whim than by reason."[78] Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" and as having three divisions: 1) ethos: the speaker's power of evincing a personal character which will make his speech credible; 2) pathos: the speaker's power of stirring the emotions of his hearers; and 3) logos: the speaker's power of proving a truth by means of persuasive arguments.[79]

A communication arts/rhetorical emphasis is not lost on the evangelical preaching scene as preaching professors have engaged this area in their research and teaching.[80] Os Guinness underscores the importance of skills like persuasion in communicating the gospel when he laments, "Most of us are not good at persuasion because we have had too much education of the wrong sort. Our best universities are great at teaching us to think, reason, argue, analyze, critique and so on, but they are not good at teaching us imagination, creativity, humor and the like . . . many of us have been

---

[78] James K. Smith, "The Lost Art of Persuasion," *Comment: Public Theology for the Common Good* (Spring 2014), 4.

[79] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, vii.

[80] See Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Hershel York's *Speaking in Bold Assurance: How to Become a Better Communicator* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2001), and Reformed Theological Seminary's Steve Brown's *How to Talk So People Will Listen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993). Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Jeffrey Arthurs, when asked what he was currently reading, responded with *Classical Rhetoric* by George Kennedy and the *Journal of Communication and Religion*.

educated out of the gift of persuasion."[81] Keller presents a balanced summation when he states:

> In the end, preaching has two basic objects in view: the Word and the human listener. It is not enough to just harvest the wheat; it must be prepared in some edible form or it can't nourish and delight. Sound preaching arises out of two loves—love of the Word of God and love of people…and while only God can open hearts, the communicator must give great time and thought both to presenting the truth accurately and to bringing it home to the hearts and lives of hearers.[82]

Another factor in listener receptivity has to do with the different learning styles and preferences of hearers. With all the different ways that listeners take in information and prefer to do so, trying to cover all of these varied needs in order to be effective is a preacher's challenge. In congregations of any size, there are listeners who are digital natives and digital adopters/immigrants. The way that these different age groups process information is different, as well as attention spans.[83] Preachers as communicators would be wise to consult resources to learn how to adapt their speaking to accommodate; communication skills are not simply a "nice to know, nice to employ if one has time" optional exercise.

Conclusion

There seem to be two different aspects to effective preaching. One is the immediate, which focuses on delivery and immediate reaction: Did the sermon exhibit unity, order, and progress? Did listeners grasp the Big Idea?

---

[81] Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 57.

[82] Keller, *Preaching*, 14.

[83] See such resources as Tim Challies, *The Next Story: Life and Faith After the Digital Explosion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

Was there clarity? These elements can be analyzed objectively through evaluation and the use of surveys and interviews. The other, less empirical aspect of sermon effectiveness is ascertaining life change as a result of preaching. The basic assertion that sermons should make a difference in people's lives is evident. Writing about Bible reading, Mark Labberton declares, "It's not simply the clarity of comprehension for which Jesus calls us to be 'perfect,' but a life that looks increasingly like the life of the Word made flesh. This is the final test of the Bible's clarity: Can people read our lives and see the life of God in us? The clarity of our faithful Bible reading is meant to show up in the clarity of our lives."[84] The same can be said about the result of biblical preaching.

However, what is not so basic is how to know (and measure) when lives are transformed and "look increasingly like the life of the Word made flesh." To query how one measures spiritual growth seems odd to ask; can growth in grace be plotted on a Life Transformation Chart? Perhaps it is a less exact metric in that it is summed up in the phrase "you know it when you see it."[85] More focused study on how specifically to target growth in holiness as a result of sermons is needed.

When examining sermon effectiveness, I would resonate most with the way Matt Woodley earlier describes preaching's overall goal and therefore effectiveness; his description covers the bases in a way that is personally

---

[84] Mark Labberton, "More Than a Plain Reading: The Bible's Clarity Is Meant to Be Readable in the Lives of Those Who Trust It," *Christianity Today* (January – February 2017), 64-67.

[85] Ephesians 5:22-23 could be a good starting point for observing a transformed life.

edifying. To reiterate, he portrays effective sermons as having "beautiful orthodoxy":

> *Orthodox* sermons have been submitted to a specific biblical text and to the larger story of God's redemption of the world in Christ. *Beautiful* sermons accurately state and then develop the big idea of a Bible passage or theme with clarity, simplicity, and liveliness. In the power of the Spirit, sermons should move people to delight in, rely upon, and receive the good news of the God who is with us and for us in Jesus Christ.

This focus deals more with the preacher's role in bringing together the different elements described above for sermon effectiveness and is an apt summary for the preacher's task.

Appendix E

Personal Devotion and Sermon Preparation

The Inherent Tension

What is the distinction between sermon preparation and the pastor's personal spiritual life—or should sermon preparation be a spiritual discipline? Can preparing to preach and nourishing one's soul be one and the same? Fred Craddock offers:

> I think sermon preparation is a spiritual discipline. When I began, my devotional life—whatever I read biblical or otherwise—was one thing. My study was something else. And then Rabbi Silverman at Vanderbilt told me, "An hour of study in the sight of the Holy One is as an hour of prayer." And I discovered that my study was drawing me closer to the message and the heart of God than this little devotional book that didn't have 9 calories in the whole thing. I discovered through the years that there was a blending of my devotional life and study life so that they are essentially the same.[1]

Donald Guthrie counters:

> What happens when I skirt my spiritual growth? I replace it with the "spiritual" tasks of pastoral life. So, for example, it is not unusual to find me substituting sermon preparation for personal worship and Bible study. "After all," I rationalize, "I will be meditating on the Bible." However, the sustained exchange of ministry duties for spiritual growth results in my becoming an inch deep. The outcome is a spiritually dry, worn-out-pastor with very little left in the tank for others. The "spring of water welling up to eternal life" has slowed to a trickle.[2]

For Craddock, merging study time when preparing sermons with personal devotional time was helpful in drawing him closer to God. Guthrie experienced the opposite when he "substituted" the ministry duty of sermon

---

[1] "Dr. Fred Craddock on Sermon Preparation," accessed February 24, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCCo5RWxqZg.

[2] Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie. *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 33.

preparation for Bible meditation. The outcome was an absence of God's refreshing flow of living water and resulted in a superficial, tired pastor.

Barbara Brown Taylor sets the discussion in context by observing, "The preacher is a living word about God's Word before the preacher ever says a word. When the preacher speaks, every word reveals the preacher's way of life. Devotion to God and neighbor is the primary prerequisite for preaching the gospel."[3]

There is the essentiality of private worship and the necessity of adequate preparation. With limited time and energy, how does the pastor negotiate both of these realities? The related issues are of ministry success and personal growth, institutional discipline versus a personal relationship. The general sentiment from pastors is that they do not want personal devotional time to be hijacked by the responsibility of sermon preparation. Perry Noble's comments show the close relationship between personal piety and message making, but he gives a disclaimer for the two being linked too closely. He instructs, "The preacher has to speak from the overflow of what God is doing inside him. This means we have to have consistent time with God—it is out of our victories and pain that we communicate the most passionately and connect most intimately. But I do not use quiet time for message preparation."[4]

---

[3] Barbara Brown Taylor, "The Preacher's Devotional Life," Ministry Matters, April 30, 2012, accessed February 24, 2017, http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2774/the-preachers-devotional-life

[4] Perry Noble, "How Do You Prepare a Message?" May 7, 2008, accessed February 24, 2017, https://perrynoble.com/blog/how-do-you-prepare-a-message.

Melvin Wade in "Devotion to Delivery" relates his experience in this area. He explains his development from reading the Bible only for sermon preparation to reading the Bible for devotional purposes. He offers, "Witnessing follows worship, so biblical preaching follows biblical devotion. Before I begin making any preparation for any sermon, the genesis point is daily, private devotion." He does not integrate the two at this level. However, later he goes on to point out how daily devotion does have positive effects on preaching: "To pass over daily devotion is to pass over not only the power to preach but even the *something* to preach…daily devotion has a powerful effect on sermon preparation and delivery. To neglect it is to neglect the very essence of preaching."[5]

Paul Tripp discusses the tension of spiritual nurture and sermon preparation in his chapter titled "Always Preparing" in *Dangerous Calling*. He notes how he can be physically present but mentally absent as his attention is taken with content that he is preparing for preaching.[6] He recounts how he hoped his reading and praying for the nurture of his own soul would solidify to points for upcoming messages and content to share with others. He articulates the challenge for preachers well in stating,

It is very difficult to have the responsibility to preach or teach God's word each week and not have this responsibility dominate your mind every time you have a Bible in your hands. The commitment of a regular time of communion with your Lord stimulates the battle in your heart between the

---

[5] See Melvin Wade, "Devotion to Delivery," in Cleophus LaRue, *Power in the Pulpit* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2003), 192.

[6] Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 183.

essentiality of private worship and the necessity of adequate preparation. In God's plan these are not mutually exclusive, nor do they compete with one another. . . . God will not call us to a task that would necessitate our disobeying him in another area. Yet it is very difficult to keep these two aspects of your calling in their proper place.[7]

For Tripp, private devotion's power is to kill the "me-ism" that is present not just in preaching but in ministry in general.[8]

When examining the interplay of personal devotion and sermon preparation—what some deem worship on the one hand and work on the other—there is the implication that one is spiritual and one is vocational; one is personal and private and the other is outward and public. Warnings as seen in Noble's comments above abound about not using devotional time to "double dip" as gathering material for teaching content. At worst it is viewed as the Scarlet Letter blazed across the pastor's chest. At best, it is seen as an acquiescence to efficiency, multitasking, and production; an implicit bow to the altar of pastoral busyness.

The Intuitive Ideal

When conceiving the thesis-project and having preaching responsibilities on a week-to-week basis, I wondered if during my personal devotional time I could or should use the upcoming preaching passages for meditation and prayer. It brought up the question of how one separates the

---

[7] Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 185.

[8] Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 189-94.

devotional life from the preaching life.[9] At a more basic level, the question arises if the two should be separated.

Pastors spend time in Scripture reading and meditating on God's Word in order to draw close to Christ, to move forward in growing in grace and holiness, to be conformed into Jesus' image. This is the same outcome for sermons with listeners. Encountering the biblical text should move a pastor's soul—repentance, gratefulness, and tears of joy should not be strangers during sermon preparation. At a base level, how can pastors expect Scripture to move upon their congregations if they did not spend enough time in the passage for it to move upon them? Adam Powers summarizes, "Meet God in the text, and craft sermons out of the worship that results."[10]

The primary purpose of personal worship and devotional practices and disciplines is not to "get up" a sermon. However, is this too strict a dichotomy and too categorical? Can God not be encountered perusing over research? Chris Howay reminds, "Dissecting a miracle study so that we see a Greek word repeated that is missing in the English or discovering some new detail about Jericho in a Bible dictionary are moments in which we encounter the Holy Spirit. We have been so conditioned to recognize encounters with God in quiet meditation what we have forgotten that God is present and inspiring us in busyness."[11]

---

[9] Barbara Brown Taylor in her spiritual autobiography notes how the rhythms of liturgy inform the pastor's daily life outside the sanctuary (*The Preaching Life* [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield,1993]), 29.

[10] Adam Powers, "Is Sermon Preparation Devotional?," The Publicans, May 20, 2014, accessed February 24, 2017, https://thepublicans.org/2014/05/20/is-sermon-preparation-devotional/.

[11] Chris Howay, "Question #1: Spirituality and Sermon Preparation," Southern Methodist University, Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence, Perkins

O. Wesley Allen argues against a polarity between the interior spiritual life and outward public proclamation:

> The problem is that we view our own faith formation as separate from the very busyness of pastoral life. We live with a dualism of professional and personal, of pastoral and spiritual. . . . If we who work in the church today cannot find spirituality *in* our work instead of just during spare moments away from our ministry, we become schizophrenic in our faith as those we accuse of being religious on Sundays and secular the rest of the week.[12]

Allen centers his rationale on Saint Benedict's *Orare est laborare, laborare est orare* ("to pray is to work, to work is to pray"). Personal spirituality and preaching as a pastoral activity, according to Allen, "must become hyphenated for the health of both pastor and congregation."[13]

Allen surveys others to marshal support for his premise that the two are not distinct. He cites Jennifer Lord in her assertion that "a preacher cannot help a congregation to experience publicly the presence of God whom the preacher has not experienced or sought privately. This makes preaching a spiritual act."[14]

Richard Lischer notes,

> The spiritual formation of the preacher is reflected in the weekly process of sermon-formation . . . there must be time for the meditative reading of the text, for praying the text, and for praying for those to whom we will preach. We will not distill the process into a series of discrete skills and separate it from our own spiritual and pastoral life. Preparing to preach is a prayerful dialogue with the text. It is a spiritual and imaginative exercise of the gospel in which the preacher plays a central role...When understood as a personal, spiritual, and theological activity, preparing to preach will not be a frantic

---

School of Theology, accessed February 24, 2017, https://blog.smu.edu/pcpe/question-1-spirituality-sermon-preparation/.

[12] O Wesley Allen, "An Hour of Study: Sermon Preparation as a Spiritual Discipline," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 45 (2013): 17-35.

[13] Allen, "An Hour of Study," 21.

[14] Allen, "An Hour of Study," 26.

search for a new technique but rather what it was from the beginning: the formation of God's people by one already formed by the word of God.[15]

Allen laments that preachers spend time preparing sermons so that they will have a sermon to preach on Sunday. The damage here is that the sermon preparation process "is experienced as a means of production and not as a mode of reception."[16]He argues for sermon preparation as a means of grace where study and prayer are lovers.[17]

Is not all of life for the pastor lived underneath the lordship of Jesus Christ where both devotion and vocation are not independent? In one sense, a pastor is always preparing to preach because he is always living and observing life and framing the Scripture passage through his experience. He knows the fickleness of the human heart because he knows his own. With this whole-life perspective in view, message preparation is not limited to hours blocked off on a calendar and accomplished at a desk.

"Quiet time", or whatever term one uses for spiritual formation, is a time to feed one's soul on the nourishing nutrients of God's Word. Drawing close to the Lord in personal devotion is not to be seen as a utilitarian exercise to forage preaching fodder. However, if one of the main benefits of planning ahead for preaching is so that the particular passages to preach on will "marinate in the own preacher's soul" and take root in his life and he has time to consider its implications and live into its truth—is not this what we strive for when we have our devotional time? Why cannot the two work in a

---

[15] Allen, "An Hour of Study," 27-28.

[16] Allen, "An Hour of Study," 32.

[17] Allen, "An Hour of Study," 34.

symbiotic relationship rather than erecting unnatural boundaries where the quiet time and preparation time never intersect?

Personal Bible study aids and resources often closely resemble the same steps in the exegetical methods for sermon preparation. For example, Oletta Wald instructs the Bible reader to engage in exegetical elements such as defining words, comparing translations, studying cross references, wrestling with meaning, and looking for repetitions and progressions in thought.[18] Howard Hendrick and William Hendrick's *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* is written for the layperson but goes in depth with exegesis and rivals the same steps that many outline in the sermon preparation process.[19] It seems more holistic and organic and less of a silo perspective when we view these two as necessarily separate with different purposes.

The issue is not so much an issue of redundancy as an intuitive move toward an integrative view of ministry as a whole-life calling. Here is how it might play out day to day when one practices something akin to the following internal conversation: "For my McCheyne Bible Reading Plan I am going to read and meditate on the four daily passages it schedules. This is my devotional reading and counts as my quiet time. After I have completed this and any other spiritual practices, I am then going to transition to another passage of Scripture that I am going to be preaching on in the not too distant future. I know that as a preacher I need to have that passage work its way

---

[18] Oletta Wald, *The New Joy of Discovery* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2002), 22-24.

[19] Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks, *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007).

into my soul and have meaning for me and apply it to my life. Hmmm. That is the same reason I was reading Scripture in my Bible reading plan. It seems like the purpose is the same. Maybe the two ought to therefore be more integrated." Some see the necessity of keeping the two separate. Powers comments, "Because of the seemingly ever-present desire in pastors to be 'always preparing' for this or that teaching, we should have another time of reading for ourselves only. It must be something you are not reading or studying to prepare for anything else. It must be totally separate from all your teaching."[20] Powers goes on to describe how although he is preaching through the book of Jonah, he is reading Genesis personally. Before spending time in Jonah for sermons, "I do my devotion with God in Genesis, asking God to let the text wash over me. After this is done, I begin the day . . . sermon preparation in Jonah."[21]

Richard Lovelace's *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* can help here. For example, in his discussion on sanctification he states, "To have faith is to receive God's Word as truth and rest upon it in dependent trust."[22] This can be done, and should, when the pastor is working in God's Word in preparing sermons. The pastor acknowledges the passage as not simply something he will pass on to hearers, but rather affirms its truth and rests in that truth with a posture of trust. It is first and foremost a word to him personally.

There is the legitimate concern and question of whether there is too much of a utilitarian lens when the spiritual disciplines are married to the

[20] Powers, "Is Sermon Preparation Devotional?"

[21] Powers, "Is Sermon Preparation Devotional?"

[22] Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life*, 102.

preaching process. How much of a convergence should there be with preaching passages and devotional practices? In thinking about this tension, it would seem more natural that if a preaching passage is to make its mark on the preacher's life, if it is to "marinate in his soul" and have the weight of lived-in conviction. The most natural place and time this occurs is not during the time allotted for sermon preparation, but rather during times of personal meditation, reflection, and wrestling with the claims of the text. Examining a text and its specific contours during what could be called devotional time and allowing for the passage's claims to work themselves out in the preacher's life seems like a sensible, intuitive, and natural way forward.

If this route is taken, there must be care that the preacher does not come across as triumphalist in his communication in that he has "mastered the content." To appear as though he never struggled with the passage's claims or that he may have in the past but not presently can give the impression to listeners that the pastor is somehow above their experience in the Christian life. It also truncates the fact that sanctification is a process, and can be seen as though the Bible is simply a book of spiritual skills that can be mastered with work and time. Also, it seems incongruent and unnecessary if the goal of personal time with God is to grow into Christ-likeness and preaching's aim is to encourage this same movement toward mature discipleship. Why not combine the two?

In the proposed four-week cycle, a pastor's devotional time can help the passage take spiritual life; he is far enough ahead to do this and not have a strict division of sermon preparation and devotional practice. The key is what the posture is—is it to preach with the congregation in mind as material for a sermon where the preacher is holding the Bible out to them and thinking,

"this is for you." Or is he reading, meditating, and praying over the passages with himself as the primary recipient.[23]

Barbara Brown Taylor, like Craddock, melds the two so that both aspects benefit. She sees a necessary connection between a "receptive devotional life" and "ripen[ing] a sermon by and by":

> One of the chief virtues of a receptive devotional life is the opportunity to spend time attending to the one thing instead of everything, to give the self wholly to God instead of bits and pieces. Such receptive time need not be directly related to sermon preparation. It needs to be directly related only to God for the fruits of this devotion ripen in the sermon by and by. An often overlooked step in the creative process is called incubation. After a preacher has read and studied, taking copious notes without yet discovering what the sermon will be about, it is time to go for a walk— not to think about the sermon but to listen to the birds. During this fallow time*, which may be described as devotional time* [emphasis added], the Holy Spirit works while the preacher is not working, creating the conditions for inspiration to occur. If preachers find themselves short on inspiration, this may be the best indication that they are also short on devotional time.[24]

John Stott similarly sees the devotional aspect of prayer as inextricably linked to the sermon preparation process in stating, "We prayed before we began to prepare, and we have tried throughout our preparation in an attitude of prayer. But now that the sermon is written, we need to pray over it. . . . It is on our knees before the Lord that we can make the message our own, possess it or re-possess it until it possesses us."[25] Steve Luxa recognizes the connection of the spiritual disciplines and sermon preparation for personal transformation and sanctification. He states,

---

[23] At issue is perspective in who is the sermon's target, only the congregation?

[24] Barbara Brown Taylor, "The Preacher's Devotional Life," April 30, 2012, accessed February 20, 2017, http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2774/the-preachers-devotional-life.

[25]

> What if God were as interested in the process we go through to prepare to preach as the sermon itself? What if we prepare sermons, but God prepares us to preach through our preparation? God is as interested in shaping us, the preacher, as he is in shaping our listeners. As a result, the process of preparing a sermon is more of a spiritual discipline than anything else. It is as much a spiritual discipline as many of the classic disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, solitude, service, and the like. And its power and effectiveness is derived in combining many of these spiritual disciplines into a single, unique discipline that progressively forms the preacher in Christ.[26]

James Westerhoff makes the case that a vibrant spiritual life is necessary for an effective ministry in general and preaching specifically.[27] Bruce Epperly reinforces this in commenting, "The process of preaching, and in particular the time the preacher spends in preparation, can transform a preacher's life spiritually, intellectually, and professionally. But, he or she must be intentional about joining spiritual and intellectual preparation with the public act of preaching."[28] At an ideal, big picture level, it seems incongruent and even unnecessary if the goal of personal time with God is to grow into Christ-likeness and preaching's aim is to encourage this same movement toward making disciples. The focus is the same but the recipients are different—the preacher and the congregation. Therefore, if the preacher is not working on sermons for "them" but "him" also, there is convergence in corporate sermon crafting and personal spiritual formation.

---

[26] Steve Luxa, "The Spiritual Discipline of Sermon Prep," Preaching Today, accessed February 24, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2016/april/spiritual-discipline-of-sermon-prep.html.

[27] James Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994). See especially his chapters, "The Spirituality of Preachers and Teachers" and "The Spirituality of Preaching and Teaching," 29-52.

[28] Bruce C. Epperly, "The Practice of Preaching and the Spiritual Life of the Preacher," Alban at Duke Divinity School, July 10, 2013, accessed February 24, 2017, https://alban.org/archive/the-practice-of-preaching-and- the-spiritual-life-of-the-preacher/.

The Personal Reality

This study reintroduced me to the question of what the spiritual life looks like, and how it takes shape, even moving beyond whether one is a pastor or not. The emphasis that one is not ready to preach or preach well until the heart is prepared and there is a vital relationship to Christ was repeated in the precedent research when looking at preparing messages. I reflected on what this life looks like and more specifically even the words and phrases used to describe it (spiritual growth, soul work, union with Christ, life change, conformed to the image of Christ, discipleship, sanctification, piety). Michael Horton's *Calvin on the Christian Life*[29] was helpful here as he unpacked a robust view of piety that resonated with me. Specifically, Horton explains that for Calvin, theology cannot be separated from Christian living. His overarching category was piety: "Piety (*pietas*), not spirituality, is the Reformer's all-encompassing term for Christian faith and practice…We've learned to unfortunately draw a line between doctrine and life, with 'piety' (like 'spirituality') falling on the 'life' side of the ledger."[30] Horton notes that for Calvin, doctrine, worship, and life are "all of one piece."[31] One cannot separate theology from life, the spiritual life, because "the root of piety is faith in the gospel."[32] Joel Beeke similarly offers that for Calvin,

> Piety is evident in people who recognize through experiential faith that they have been accepted in Christ and engrafted into his body by the grace of God.

---

[29] Michael Horton, *Calvin and the Christian Life: Enjoying and Glorifying God Forever* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

[30] Horton, *Calvin and the Christian Life*, 17.

[31] Horton, *Calvin and the Christian Life*, 18.

[32] Horton, *Calvin and the Christian Life*, 34.

> In this "mystical union," the Lord claims them as his own in life and in death. They become God's people and members of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This relationship restores their joy of fellowship with God; it recreates their lives.[33]

In other words, a theological orientation and overlay in sermons and preparing for them is spiritually transformative.

Calvin's own name for his *Institutes* is instructive here. Though the term *Institutio* (instruction or education) is used in the title of this work, Calvin describes his massive book as a *summa pietas*, the sum of piety. "In this," Horton notes, "his whole corpus challenges modern approaches that would starkly divide between dogmatics, practical theology, and devotional literature."[34] I would add that this is true for preaching and preparing for preaching as well.

In seeking to integrate the two together, an unexpected result happened on the way to assimilation. In using the preaching passages for devotional material, I found myself conflicted. When I tried to combine the two, I spent more time writing down ideas and trains of thought for creative pieces and presentation angles. Perhaps it was because I was already in conversation with people about the sermon series and passages and felt the need to get material out to them as the preaching date loomed. I found that I was not as much "devoting spiritually" as I was "developing sermonically." It felt like I was trying to straddle a fence with two different purposes to the point that I was not doing either particularly well. I felt as Tripp did when he

---

[33] Joel Beeke, "John Calvin on Piety," July 2009, Evangelical Times, accessed February 24, 2017, http://www.evangelicaltimes.org/archive/item/3696/Historical/John-Calvin-on-piety/.

[34] Horton, *Calvin and the Christian Life*, 37.

reflects, "I think all preparation to preach should be devotional, but in my case, preparation crushed devotion."[35] Perhaps if there were more time between the preaching and heavier engagement with the text, there would not be the urgency to produce sermon content. Then perhaps having the preaching passages as devotional meditation would seem more authentic and less utilitarian.

When I separated the two, there was less distraction and internal tension. Without one eye toward sermon content, I tended to be more focused on lingering in God's presence without a secondary purpose; the combining tended to divide my attention and made daily, personal worship seem like it had to be justified by getting some productivity out of it. For me, this tendency was present enough to be distracting and therefore unwanted. When my senses are not up for sermon content, I am more apt to commune with God. The title of Marva Dawn's book on worship, *A Royal "Waste" of Time*,[36] captures the essence of my thoughts here. This separating the two may not be the most efficient from a utilitarian standpoint. However, our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ are not measured by practical metrics and means. Jesus invites us to come to him and he will give refreshment;[37] we have moved from slaves to friends[38] and are given the opportunity to

---

[35] Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 284.

[36] One of the things Dawn notes is how worship is not expedient and how this is subversive in our pragmatic culture. See Marva J. Dawn, *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshipping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 112.

[37] Matthew 11:28.

[38] John 15:15.

abide in him as the vine. This does not speak toward efficiency in church ministry. When I tried this, I found myself compiling rather than abiding. Paradoxically, I have found that when I am resting in grace and have taken time to connect with God in worship alone or with others, this has positive effects on sermon crafting; my mind is more fertile and alert to the things of God and I am more settled in thought. This has seemed to have positive effects when I do move toward set times of study for sermon preparation. Others, such as Craddock, find it helpful to combine the two. A dogmatic stance here is not warranted; an individual's assessment of the effect is central.

Initially, it was more instinctual, congruent, and holistic to not atomize sermon preparation and personal piety into two different activities. However, when I engaged in trying to do so in three different preaching cycles over three years, I found, as the apostle Paul described, "another law at work among the members of my body." I struggled. I toggled from scrawling notes for sermon content on scraps of paper to trying to refocus ideas and thoughts on my Moleskine journal that was the domain of the devotional.

From researching and reading on this interplay, I knew that some pastors' processes are to go through material devotionally at the outset before preaching in order to get familiar with the content and to have the passage speak into their own lives. As stated earlier, it allows the material to marinate and settle into the pastor's soul before a more academic study. I did like this in theory. It sounds philosophically sound and practically expedient—why should formal study be divorced from personal edification? However, when I tried to devotionally engage Galatians, the focus for my

third preaching cycle, I was in "for them" mode in collecting content for the sermon. It was a challenge for me to be in a recipient mode.

The Hopeful Synthesis

Indeed, my desire was (and still is) to marry robust sermon preparation with deep devotion. Here, sermon study would be synonymous with sanctification and concentration on the exegetical process would lead to communing with the Word made flesh. The thought of the preacher as both the instrument to communicate the gospel and at the same time a recipient of that same gospel who needs its message resonates with me. Are there irreconcilable differences in this proposed marriage that leave a pastor jilted? It seems that posture is the key: is he preparing with a transactional mindset where he is giving, transferring principles and ideas to his congregation, a "this is for you" orientation? Or is he rather preparing with a view that the passage as God's Word is not simply or primarily for a sermon but rather for his growth in grace—a "this is for me/us" attitude? Where is his gaze and focus as he prepares? Thus there is an attitudinal posture, as well as perhaps a physical posture that reflects the attitudinal. Stott reflects this is offering, "I have always found it helpful to do as much of my sermon preparation as possible on my knees, with the Bible open before me, in prayerful study."[39]

Doxology is the goal of theology. J. I. Packer comments on the vital connection between the two in stating, "Theology is for doxology and devotion—that is, praise of God and practice of godliness. . . . Theology is at its healthiest when it is consciously under the eye of the God of whom it

---

[39] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 222.

speaks, and when it is singing his glory."[40] Mining the depths of theological truths in a passage should lead to impassioned worship, corporately and personally. The expositor is not a calculating clinician (having a structured step- by-step process for sermon preparation could lend itself to this hazard) but rather a worshipping creature responding to his Creator.

Conclusion

A good way forward when looking at spiritual discipline or devotion and sermon planning and preparation is to see the former providing a foundation for the latter. Paul's counsel to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16 is instructive when grappling with the tension: "Watch your life and doctrine closely, persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." While the practice of daily personal worship may not directly affect sermon content and preparation, it does so in a less obvious way. When asked how long it takes him to prepare a sermon, Alastair Begg replied, "a lifetime."[41] It is similar to the gifted high school athlete who does not specialize in one sport while in high school but is considered a better all-around college prospect by playing multiple sports.[42] In the same vein, having

---

[40] J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), vii. by-step process for sermon preparation could lend itself to this hazard) but rather a worshipping creature responding to his Creator.

[41] 41 "How Does Alastair Begg Prepare for His Sermons and Teaching," September 25, 2012, accessed February 24, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXj6MLQ8138. Begg reflects, "All the fabric of your life is brought into the preparation and delivery process."

[42] Some advocate those who play multiple sports in high school fare better in college athletics; see David King and Margot Starbuck, *Overplayed: A Parent's Guide to Sanity in the World of Youth Sports* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016). Ohio State Buckeyes coach Urban Meyer prefers to recruit multiple-sport athletes due to their increased leadership and athletic abilities (interview with Urban Meyer on ESPN Radio 1440 AM, "The Rich Eisen Show," September 23, 2016).

a devotional time that is not tied to the preaching passage could give one more of a 360-degree view of Scripture's redemptive story if one does read more broadly in Scripture during one's devotional time. It might make one a better preacher. It might make me a better, more effective preacher also.

Appendix F

Personal Process for Sermon Planning

After researching other pastors, knowing my tendencies, and having the three series as a learning laboratory, I propose the following framework for a personal sermon preparation process. It brings together the most helpful elements that I read about,[1] is put into practice when preaching, and is realistic. This would assume that my general preaching calendar would be planned a year in advance, with Scripture passages and general themes already determined.

Background: The Mile Race as a Template

As a high school runner, I knew that in the mile race conventional wisdom says that the first lap and final lap should be the fastest.[2] For example, Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj at 3:43.14 holds the current world record in the mile. El Guerrouj's lap times follow the pattern of faster first and last laps. His laps clocked 55.6, 56.0, 56.3, and 55.2. In general, lap 2 and lap 3 are run at a slightly slower pace. For simplicity, if a runner wanted to run under a 4:00 mile, the holy grail for milers, his ideal splits for the four laps would look something like this:

---

[1] I found the most resonance with Ken Shigematsu's method articulated in "Taking the Pressure Out of Sermon Prep," Preaching Today, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2015/october/taking-pressure-out-of-sermon-prep.html.

[2] Tim Noakes studied the past hundred years of world-record mile times and found that twenty- four out of the thirty-two records were set when the first lap and the last lap were the fastest. See Tim Noakes, "Which Lap Is the Slowest: An Analysis of 32 World Mile Record Performances," *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 43 (October 2009): 760-64.

Lap 1 58.5 seconds(58.5 total)

Lap 2 61 seconds   (1:59.5 total)

Lap 3 61 seconds   (3:00.5 total)

Lap 4 58 seconds   (3:58.5 total)

A faster first lap enables the runner to establish initial positioning and not get boxed in the pack where pace cannot be set as easily, and there is a danger of getting jostled or tangled up with other runners. It allows the runner to set up the rest of the race and to finish with a final kick for optimal efficiency.

<center>

The Four-Week Sermon Cycle: Phil Hargrove's
"Month-Out Mile Plan"

</center>

Taking a cue from the mile race, my process will follow the same pattern. In the world of sermon planning and construction, this routine can be similar in that the preacher establishes his position of where he is going with initial research and sets up favorably for the intermediary laps. The final week is an end spurt to put it all together to ensure immediacy and relevance.

Based on precedent research and my experience with the three preaching cycles practiced, this plan of having more time and energy directed at the first week and fourth week seems the most tenable for a personal way of working moving forward. If I devoted approximately fifteen to seventeen hours a week to sermon preparation, I would each week be starting the sermon research for four weeks later and writing/rehearsing the sermon for the upcoming Sunday. The week would as an overview resemble this rhythm (table F.1).

Table F1. General Week Schedule

Day	Time Allotment	Focus
Monday	5 hours	Beginning research and reading for sermon for four weeks out
Tuesday	3 hours	Work on sermon for three weeks out
Wednesday	3 hours	Work on sermon for two weeks out
Thursday	3 hours	Preparation for upcoming Sunday sermon
Friday	Off	Off
Saturday	3 hours	Final preparation for upcoming Sunday sermon
Sunday	1 hour	Read through, pray, Preach!

Using Philippians as a test case from the first series, the breakdown would be as follows for a May-June-July 2017 preaching schema (table F2).

Table F2. May-June-July Preaching Schema

May 2017						
Monday (5 hours)	**Tuesday** (3 hours)	**Wednesday** (3 hours)	**Thursday** (3 hours)	**Friday** (Off)	**Saturday** (3 hours)	**Sunday**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Philippians 1:1-11	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Philippians 1:12-26	16 Philippians 1:1-11	17	18	19	20	21
22 Philippians 1:27-30	23 Philippians 1:12-26	24 Philippians 1:1-11	25	26	27	28
29 Philippians 2:1-11	30 Philippians 1:27-30	31 Philippians 1:12-26				

June 2017						
Monday (5 hours)	**Tuesday** (3 hours)	**Wednesday** (3 hours)	**Thursday** (3 hours)	**Friday** (Off)	**Saturday** (3 hours)	**Sunday**
			1 Philippians 1:1-11	**2** Off	**3** Philippians 1:1:11	**4** Preach Philippians 1:1-11
5 Philippians 2:12-18	**6** Philippians 2:1-11	**7** Philippians 1:27-30	**8** Philippians 1:12-26	**9** Off	**10** Philippians 1:12-26	**11** Preach Philippians 1:12-26
12 Philippians 2:19-30	**13** Philippians 2:12-18	**14** Philippians 2:1-11	**15** Philippians 1:27-30	**16** Off	**17** Philippians 1:27-30	**18** Preach Philippians 1:27-30
19 Philippians 3:1-11	**20** Philippians 2:19-30	**21** Philippians 2:12-18	**22** Philippians 2:1-11	**23** Off	**24** Philippians 2:1-11	**25** Preach Philippians 2:1-11
26 Philippians 3:12-16	**27** Philippians 3:1-11	**28** Philippians 2:19-30	**29** Philippians 2:12-18	**30** Off		

July 2017						
Monday (5 hours)	**Tuesday** (3 hours)	**Wednesday** (3 hours)	**Thursday** (3 hours)	**Friday** (Off)	**Saturday** (3 hours)	**Sunday**
					1 Philippians 2:12-18	**2** Preach Philippians 2:12-18
3 Philippians 3: 17-21	**4** Philippians 3:12-16	**5** Philippians 3:1-11	**6** Philippians 2:19-30	**7** Off	**8** Philippians 2:19-30	**9** Preach Philippians 2:19-30
10	**11** Philippians 3:12-16	**12** Philippians 3:17-21	**13** Philippians 3:1-11	**14** Off	**15** Philippians 3:1-11	**16** Preach Philippians 3:1-11
17	**18**	**19** Philippians 3:17-21	**20** Philippians 3:12-16	**21** Off	**22** Philippians 3:12-16	**23** Preach Philippians 3:12-16

24	25	26	27 Philippians 3:17-21	28 Off	29 Philippians 3:17-21	30 Preach Philippians 3:17-21
31						

As the pastor works on two different sermons during the week with the above timetable, this gives the advantage of having time margins. The unexpected death of a church member does not sabotage the whole week. It gives time for the pastor to think about and deal personally with the preaching passage in substantive ways—"marinating" in the passage, ruminating on it while engaged in other tasks. This template allows for a better sermon in that it enfolds the ten-day creative cycle principle.[3] It also, when combined with an annual preaching plan, gives others who are planning worship enough weeks in advance to think of music and other liturgical elements that can make the service flow better with one central theme that is amplified.

To make this blueprint work, as one sermon series was finishing, there would be a one- to two-week lag time during which the pastor would begin preparing for the next series. He would not preach in order to have the time to devote to always being ahead. This necessitates finding a guest preacher or a staff member to preach for those weeks. I would ideally see the last three-hour preparation block early on Saturday morning. This finish line affords more personal peace through the rest of the day and into Sunday. The

---

[3] [3]See Ken Shigematsu's pleasant epiphany when talking with Haddon Robinson in "Hitting Your Creative Peak," Preaching Today, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2-15/june/hitting-your-creative-peak-html

sermon completed, this pastor is then free to enjoy time with his family and maybe even a guilt-free college football game.

Bibliography

Adam, Peter: *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Adams, Jay. *Audience Adaptations in the Sermons and Speeches of Paul.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976.

———. *Preaching with Purpose: A Comprehensive Textbook on Biblical Preaching.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982.

———. *Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982.

Akin, Daniel, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage. *Engaging Exposition: A 3-D Approach to Preaching.* Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011.

Albrecht, Steven, and John Koessler. *How to Preach a Sermon: An Electronic Guide from Formation to Delivery (version 2.0).* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.

Allen, Ronald J., and Gilbert L. Bartholomew. *Preaching Verse by Verse.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000.

Aristotle. *Rhetoric.* Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004.

Awbrey, Ben. *How Effective Sermons Begin.* Eugene, OR: Christian Focus Publications, 2009.

Barth, Karl. *Homiletics.* Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and David Daniels. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991.

Beale, G. K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Berkley, James, ed. *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992.

Blackwood, Andrew. *Planning a Year's Pulpit Work.* New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1942.

Broadus, John. *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons.* Revised by Vernon Stanfield. 4th ed. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1979.

Brown, H. C. *Steps to a Sermon: An Eight-Step Plan for Preaching with Confidence.* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996.

Burns, Bob, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald Guthrie, eds. *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013.

Buttrick, David. *Homiletic: Moves and Structures.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987.

Cahill, Dennis. *The Shape of Preaching: Theory and Practice of Sermon Design.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2007.

Campbell, Phil, and Paul Millar. *Saving Eutychus: How to Preach God's Word and Keep People Awake.* Kingsford, Australia: St. Matthias Press, 2013.

Calvin, John. *The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.* Calvin's Commentaries.

Translated by William Pringle. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

_____. *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Translated by Henry Beveridge. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008.

Carrell, Lori. *The Great American Sermon Survey: The Inside Scoop on What Preachers and Their Listeners Think About Sermons.* Wheaton, IL: Mainstay Church Resources, 2000.

Carrick, John. *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric.* Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002.

Carter, Terry, Scott Duvall, and Daniel Hays. *Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon.* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

———. *Christ-Centered Sermons: Models of Redemptive Preaching.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

———. *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice*: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.

Clark, Charles. "Designing a Systematic Approach to Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar." DMin Thesis-Project. Tennessee Baptist Seminary, 2010.

Clowney, Edmund. *Preaching and Biblical Theology.* Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1977.

———. *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.

Cooper, Peter. "Biblical Dialogue Preaching: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Interactive Sermons." DMin Thesis-Project. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2009.

Cox, Richard H. *Sport Psychology: Concepts and Applications*. 3rd ed. Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark, 1994.

Cox, Richard M. *Rewiring Your Preaching: How the Brain Processes Sermons*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Craddock, Fred B. *As One Without Authority*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979.

———. *Overhearing the Gospel*. 4h ed. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002.

———. *Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985.

Csikszentmihallyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.

Currie, David. *The Big Idea of Biblical Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017.

Dash, Darryl. *Ordinary Preacher: A Short Book on Preaching Well, Even If You're Average*. Toronto: Gospel for Life, 2016.

Davis, Ken. *SCORRE Training Workbook: Become a Better Speaker Today*. Franklin, TN: Dynamic Communicators International, 1996.

Day, David. *Preaching with All You've Got: Embodying the Word*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.

Deak, JoAnne. *Your Fantastic Elastic Brain.* Belvedere, CA: Little Pickle Press, 2010.

Demaray, Donald. *An Introduction to Homiletics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974.

DeMoss, Nancy Leigh. *A Place of Quiet Rest: Finding Intimacy with God Through a Daily Devotional Life*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2000.

Dever, Mark. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. 3rd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.

———. and Greg Gilbert. *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012.

Dodson, Rhett, ed. *Unashamed Workmen: How Expositors Prepare and Preach*. Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publication, 2014.

Duduit, Michael, ed. *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1992.

———. *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights from Twenty Top Pastors.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.

Duhig, Charles. *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business.* Chicago: Random House, 2012.

Duke, Robert. *The Sermon as God's Word: Theologies of Preaching.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980.

Drury, Keith. *The Wonder of Worship: Why We Worship the Way We Do.* Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2002.

Edwards, J. Kent. *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

———. *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go Beyond the Superficial.* Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009.

English, Donald. *An Evangelical Theology of Preaching.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

Epperly, Bruce. *Tending to the Holy: The Practice of the Presence of God in Ministry.* Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009.

Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology.* Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983.

Gallo. Carmine. *Talk Like TED: The 9 Public-Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014.

Gibson, Scott M. *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012.

——— . ed. *Making a Difference in Preaching: Haddon Robinson on Biblical Preaching.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

———, and Keith Willhite. *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success.* New York: Little, Brown, 2008

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

Gorday, Peter J., ed. *Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.* Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Thomas C. Oden, gen. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.

Guiness, Os. *Fool's Talk: The Lost Art of Christian Persuasion*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015.

Guthrie, Donald. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989.

Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Heisler, Greg. *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation* and *Delivery*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007.

Helm, David. *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

Hendricks, Howard G. *Color Outside the Lines: A Revolutionary Approach to Creative Leadership*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1988.

―――, and William Hendricks. *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bibl*e. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007.

Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians, I and 2 Timothy, and Titus*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959.

Henegar, Walt. *Procrastination: First Steps to Change*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006.

Henry, Carl. *God, Revelation, and Authority*. Vol. 2. Waco, TX: Word, 1983.

Hinds, Jeffery. "A Research Project Using the Long-Term Sermon Preparation Model for Preaching the Book of Second Corinthians to Stimulate Spiritual Growth in the Congregation at Fellowship Evangelical Free Church in Dallas, Pennsylvania." DMin Thesis-Project. Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001.

Horton, Michael. *Calvin and the Christian Life: Glorifying and Enjoying God Forever*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

―――. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Howard, Grant. *Creativity in Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1987.

Hughes, Jack. *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures*. Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2001.

Hybels, Bill, Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon W. Robinson. *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*. Mastering Ministry. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1990.

Ireton, Kimberly Conway. *The Circle of Seasons: Meeting God in the Church Year*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.

Jamieson, Robert. "Biblical Theology and Corporate Worship." www.9marks.org. August 20, 2014.

Jensen, Eric. *Enriching the Brain: How to Maximize Every Learner's Potential*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Johnson, Darrell. *The Glory of Preaching: Participating in God's Transformation of the World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007.

Johnson, Dennis. *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All of Scripture*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007.

Johnson, Stephen. "Preaching for Spiritual Maturity Through the Use of a Long-Range Preaching Plan." DMin Thesis Project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002.

Jones, Kirk Byron. *The Jazz of Preaching: How to Preach with Great Freedom and Joy*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2004.

Jowett, John Henry. *The Preacher: His Life and Work*. Yale Lectures on Preaching. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Teaching and Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981.

Kay, James. *Preaching and Theology*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007.

Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Keller, Timothy. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

———. *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Viking Press, 2015.

Kelly, Brandon, and Joe Hoagland. *Preaching Sticky Sermons. A Practical Guide to Preparing, Writing, and Delivering Memorable Sermons*. Bradenton, FL: Rainer Publishing Group, 2016.

Kroll, Woodrow. *Prescription for Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980.

Kuruvilla, Abraham. *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2013.

Larson, Craig Brian, ed. *Sermon Preparation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012.

LaRue, Cleophas, ed. *More Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009.

Lenski, Richard. *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1946.

Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004.

Lewis, Ralph L., and Gregg Lewis. *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983.

———. *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1989.

Lischer, Richard. *Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

——— . *A Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1992.

———, and William Willimon, eds. *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995.

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. *Preaching and Preachers*. 40th anniversary ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Long, Thomas. *The Witness of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

Lowry, Eugene. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Rev. ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1981.

MacArthur, John, ed. *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*. Dallas, TX: Word, 1992.

Massey, James Earl. *Designing the Sermon: Order and Movement in Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980.

Maxwell, John. *Everyone Communicates Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010.

McDill, Wayne. *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.

Merida, Tony. *The Christ-Expositor: A Field Guide for Word-Driven Disciple Makers*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.

Meyer, Jason. *Preaching: A Biblical Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.

Miller, Calvin. *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995.

———. *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.

Milligram, Abraham. *Jewish Worship*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1971.

Morgan, Tony. *Developing a Theology of Planning*. Kindle edition, produced by Ben Stroup, 2013.

Murray, Iain. D. *Martyn-Lloyd Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939–1981*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990.

Noakes, Tim. "Which Lap Is the Slowest: An Analysis of 32 World Mile Record Performances." *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 43 (October 2009): 760-64.

O'Day, Gail, and Thomas Long, eds. *Listening to the Word: Studies in the Honor of Fred B. Craddock*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.

Olford, Stephen. *Anointed Expository Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2011.

Oswald, Roy, and Otto Kroeger. *Personality Type and Religious Leadership*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988.

Overdorf, Daniel. *One Year to Better Preaching: 52 Exercises to Hone Your Skills*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013.

Pasquarello, Michael. *Christian Preaching: A Trinitarian Theology of Proclamation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.

———. *Sacred Rhetoric: Preaching as a Theological and Pastoral Practice of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012.

———. *We Speak Because We Have First Been Spoken: A Grammar of the Preaching Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009.

Pearce, Winston. *Planning Your Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman, 1967.

Pelican, Jaroslav, and Valerie Hotchkiss, Valerie. *Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Pelton, Randal E. *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014.

Perry, Lloyd. *A Manual for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965.

Peterson, David. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Piper, John. *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990.

Pitt-Watson, Ian. *A Primer for Preachers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986.

Poythress, Vern. *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1991.

Quicke, Michael J. *Preaching as Worship: An Integrative Approach to Formation in Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013.

———. *360 Degree Peaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

Rainer, Thom. *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011.

Rath, Tom. *Now, Discover Your Strengths: StrengthsFinder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press, 2007.

Raymer, Roger. "Mentoring Pastoral Staff in Homiletics: A Manual for Senior Pastors." DMin Thesis-Project. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2003.

Richard, Ramesh. *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.

Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

———, and Craig Bryan Larson. *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Rummage, Stephen. *Planning Your Preaching: A Step-by-Step Guide for Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002.

Ryken, Leland, and Todd Wilson, eds. *Preach the Word: Essays in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009.

Ryken, Philip Graham, Derek W. H. Thomas, J. Ligon Duncan III, eds. *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003.

Saarinen, Risto. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008.

Satta, Ronald. "A Paradigm for Preaching Paul: A Step-by-Step Manual for Preparing Expository Messages from the Pauline Epistles." DMin Thesis Project. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997.

Scharf, Greg. *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Unclogging Bottlenecks That Restrict the Flow of God's Word to God's People Through Preaching.* Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016.

Schultze, Quentin. *An Essential Guide to Public Speaking: Serving Your Audience with Faith, Skill, and Virtue.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.

Sherwood, Christopher. *Compelled to Listen: The Communication Techniques of America's Super Star Preachers.* Saarbrucken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, 2009.

Smith, Robert, Jr. *Doctrine That Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life.* Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008.

Smith, William. "Designing a Program of Planned Preaching for the Estes Church of Christ Henderson." DMin Thesis-Project. Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1990.

Spurgeon, Charles. *Lectures to My Students.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010.

Stanley, Andy, and Lane Jones. *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication.* Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006.

Stokes, Mack. *Theology for Preaching.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994.

Stott, John. *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.

Sunukjian, Donald. *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance.* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007.

Swindoll, Charles. *Saying It Well: Touching Others with Your Words.* New York: Hachette Book Group, 2012.

Thielen, Martin. *Getting Ready for Sunday's Sermon: A Practical Guide for Sermon Preparation.* Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1990.

Trueman, Carl. *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Vanderwell, Howard, and Norma Malefytt. *Designing Worship Together: Models and Strategies for Worship Planning.* Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005.

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Vibert, Simon. *Excellence in Preaching: Studying the Craft of Leading Preachers.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011.

Vines, Jerry, and Jim Shaddix. *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons.* Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999.

Wald, Oletta. *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study.* Minneapolis, MH: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

Ward, Timothy. *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Ware, Bruce. *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005.

Webb, Stephen. *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004.

Webber, Robert. *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

Westerhoff, John. *The Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching.* Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994.

White, James. *Introduction to Christian Worship.* Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990.

Wiersbe, Warren, and David Wiersbe. *The Elements of Preaching: The Art of Biblical Preaching—Clearly and Simply Presented.* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1986.

Willimon, William. *Proclamation and Theology.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005.

Williamson, G. I. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism for Study Classes.* Rev. ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003.

Winter, Richard. *Perfecting Ourselves to Death: The Pursuit of Excellence and the Perils of Perfectionism.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Wuest, Kenneth. *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.

York, Hershael W. and Bert Decker. *Preaching with BOLD Assurance: A Solid Approach to Engaging Exposition.* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003.

Vita

The author of this work is Phillip L. Hargrove Jr. Born on December 13, 1972, Phil grew up in Taylors, South Carolina. After graduating from Riverside High School, he received his B.A. in religion at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1995. He attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and graduated from Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, with a Master of Divinity in 1999. After serving on staff at Carmel Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, he received his Master of Theology from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, in 2002.

Following Union Seminary, he was pastor of Ramah Presbyterian Church in Huntersville, North Carolina, from 2002 to 2006 and then director of admissions at Union Presbyterian Seminary from 2006 to 2008.

Since 2008, he has served as the associate pastor of young adults, marriage and family, and men's ministry at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, where he resides with his wife, Cary, and four children, Alexina, Mia, Lincoln, and Rosa Kevan.

Currently an ordained teaching elder in the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), Reverend Hargrove has served churches since college in the Southern Baptist, Presbyterian Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA) denominations.

The thesis-project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Starting studies in January 2011, the expected graduation date is January 2018.